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MODERN SPIRITUALISM

MODERN SPIRITUALISM

A HISTORY AND A CRITICISM

BY

FRANK PODMORE

AUTHOR OF "STUDIES IN PSYCHICAL RESEARCH," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

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CONTENTS

BOOK III

SPIRITUALISM IN ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

TABLE TURNING AND TABLE TALKING

PAGE

Mrs. Hayden's séances in London—The raps—Attitude of the London press—G. H. Lewes in the *Leader*—Elliotson in the *Zoist*—R. Chambers in *Chambers's Journal*—Testimony of Professor de Morgan—Table-turning—Explanations of Braid, Faraday, and Carpenter—The popular view, Electricity—Sandby, Townshend, Elliotson, and other Mesmerists adopt similar views—The Evangelical clergy regard table-turning as satanic—Revs. Godfrey, Gillson, and Dibdin—The Spiritualist view—Testimony of Ashburner—Conversion of Robert Owen—The Keighley circle—Dr. Hardinge and Julius Hartegilligan, the new Messiah . . 3

CHAPTER II

THE INCUBATION PERIOD

Robert Owen's share in the movement—The *New Existence of Man upon Earth*—The *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*—Home's first visit—Mrs. Marshall's séances—Private mediums—Dixon and Dan—Mrs. de Morgan's servant "Jane"—"Inspirational" writing—Robert Owen and the Crowned Angel of the Seventh Sphere—The spirits of Shakespeare, Franklin, the Duke of Wellington, and others—Extraordinary influence of these automatic utterances—Testimony of Thomas Shorter, Dr. Garth Wilkinson—Mrs. de Morgan's book, *From Matter to Spirit*—Automatic drawings—Mrs. Newton Crosland and *Light in the Valley*—Drawing in W. M. Wilkinson's family—The Howitts catch the infection—Revelations of Frank Starr; of J. G. H. Brown, of Nottingham—General characteristics of the early movement in this country . . . 22

CHAPTER III

THE AMERICAN INVASION

Second visit of Home: Article in the *Cornhill Magazine*—Squire and his table-lifting performances: Testimony of Dr. Lockhart Robertson—Foster and pellet-reading: Testimony of Spicer, Barkas, and others—The Davenport Brothers—Articles in the *Standard*, *Times*, *Lancet*, etc.—Imitation of the manifestations by conjurers—Exposure of the Davenports at Liverpool—Challenge of the Anthropological Society not accepted 47

CHAPTER IV

PRIVATE MEDIUMSHIP

PAGE

Physical manifestations originated in England with amateurs—Mrs. Everitt, Edward Childs, Willie Turketine, the first Mrs. Guppy, Miss Nichol (the second Mrs. Guppy), her flower "apports," etc.—Discussion of private "mediumship" in general—Automatic phenomena widely prevalent at this period—Testimony of Dr. McLeod, Mr. Fusedale, Miss Houghton, Mrs. de Morgan, Miss Anna Blackwell, and various witnesses before the Dialectical Society, to seeing visions, hearing voices, to automatic drawing and writing, and to involuntary guidance in action—Conclusion: that mediumship is to be explained as an abnormal development of the subconscious activities, not necessarily involving any serious deviation from sanity 63

CHAPTER V

PHYSICAL MEDIUMSHIP IN GENERAL

Herne and Williams amongst the earliest professionals in this country—Description of their séances—The transit of Mrs. Guppy, and sudden appearance at one of these circles—Spirit-writing by Mrs. Jencken's baby—Mrs. Fay's séances—The writer's experience with Miss Nella Davenport—How the trick was done—David Duguid and his "spirit" paintings—Dr. Slade's slate-writing performances: Professor Ray Lankester's exposure—Mr. Morell Theobald's servant and her mediumship—Direct spirit-writing and poems from the Persian Saadi 78

CHAPTER VI

MATERIALISATION

Mr. Livermore's experiences with Kate Fox in 1861, etc.—The Keeler materialisations near Auburn, N.Y.—Mrs. Guppy's earliest face-materialisation—Herne and Williams—Miss Florence Cook: her full-form materialisations—Miss Showers and her servant Ellen—"John King" and "Peter" appear—Dr. Richardson describes in the *Medium* the spirit form of "Florence Maple"—Various exposures—Miss Cook and Mr. Volckman—Miss Showers and Serjeant Cox, etc., etc.—Spiritualists recognise dubious nature of manifestations—Various theories advocated—Transfiguration—Imposture by spirits—Temporary splitting up of medium's material organism—Williams' performance before the Research Committee of the B.N.A.S.—Exposure of Williams and Rita at Amsterdam—Miss Wood's "test" séances, and the writer's criticisms—Subsequent exposure of Miss Wood—Of spirit drapery—Of "recognition" at dark séances—Quotation from the *Seybert Report* . . 95

CHAPTER VII

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS

Tumler in New York in 1862-3—Mrs. Guppy and Hudson—Enthusiastic reception of the first spirit photographs—Subsequent demonstration of "double exposure," and differences of opinion amongst Spiritualists—"Recognition" of the photographs—Buguet's studio in Paris: acceptance by Stainton Moses and others of his pictures—Buguet's trial and confession—Remarkable evidence of recognition—Mr. Beattie and Josty—Other spirit photographs, mostly from private sources—Various explanations of the results 117

CHAPTER VIII

CLAIRVOYANCE AND TRANCE-SPEAKING

PAGE

General lack of evidence for clairvoyance or telepathy amongst mediums—Mr. Barkas' experiments with Madame Esperance in 1875—Analysis of the records—David Duguid's trance-painting with closed eyes—Hafed, Prince of Persia, dictates his life-history through Duguid's mouth—Description and criticism of the book—Other inspirational writings—Inspirational speaking—Mrs. Hardinge Britten, Mr. Morse—Serjeant Cox's testimony—Mrs. Cora L. V. Tappan-Richmond—Her career—Extracts from an improvised lecture on the Darwinian theory—An eloquent peroration—Two quotations from her "inspirational" poems—Criticism of these automatic utterances—Other cases cited . . 126

CHAPTER IX

SCIENCE AND SUPERSTITION

Unfortunate attitude of scientific men in general to the subject: quotation from the *Times*—Sir D. Brewster's séance with Home—His account in the *Morning Advertiser* contrasted with the contemporary account in his private diary—Professor de Morgan's testimony—The trial of Lyon *v.* Home—Faraday's letter on an invitation to investigate Home's feats—Tyndall's experiences, and attitude to the subject—Investigation by the Dialectical Society—Their Report—Criticism of the evidence offered—Testimony from Serjeant Cox, Cromwell Varley, Dr. A. R. Wallace, F.R.S., and others—Dr. Carpenter's attitude—Mr. Crookes' investigations—His defence of Miss Cook—Photographing the spirit form at Mr. Crookes' house—Miss Cook and the spirit "Katie" appear simultaneously—Miss Cook placed in a galvanic circuit by Cromwell Varley—Mr. Crookes adopts similar tests with Mrs. Fay—Criticism—Professor Barrett at the Glasgow Meeting of the British Association . 140

CHAPTER X

GENERAL SURVEY OF THE MOVEMENT

Growth of the movement in France—Allan Kardec and Reincarnation—In Germany and on the Continent generally—Speculations of Perty, von Hartmann, Hellenbach, Aksakof, and others—In London Spiritualism under guidance of Howitt at first predominantly Christian—Provincial Spiritualism in England Democratic and Secularist—James Burns—His views and work—His periodicals, *Human Nature* and the *Medium*—Description of the popular movement—Quotations from Mr. St. George Stock and Mr. Gerald Massey—The scientific aspect represented by W. H. Harrison and the *Spiritualist*—Founding of the "British National Association of Spiritualists"—Serjeant Cox and the "Psychological Society"—Rationalistic explanations of the phenomena—The Mesmerists—Mr. Guppy and "Mary Jane"—Views of Charles Bray—Thought rays and a general thought reservoir—Serjeant Cox's *Mechanism of Man*—Its scientific and philosophic conceptions—Various contemporary schools of mysticism—Account of Esoteric Buddhism—Professor Barrett and the Society for Psychical Research—Present state of the movement 161

BOOK IV

PROBLEMS OF MEDIUMSHIP

CHAPTER I

SOME FOREIGN INVESTIGATIONS

PAGE

Examination of the evidence in general—(*a*) The psychological phenomena, (*b*) the physical phenomena—Defects in the evidence for (*b*)—Two special objections—Establishment of general presumption against genuineness of physical phenomena—Chief foreign investigations—De Gasparin and Thury, Baron de Guldenstubbé, Zöllner and Slade—Tying of knots in endless cord—Abstraction of coins from closed boxes, etc.—The Seybert Commission—Dark séances—Their special difficulties—Fallacies of the sense of touch—Eusapia Paladino—The Milan experiments—Richet's criticism—The experiments at the Ile Roubaud in 1894—Testimony of Professor Lodge and others—Dr. Hodgson's criticisms—Exposure of Eusapia at Cambridge in 1895—General estimate of the evidence in Eusapia's case 181

CHAPTER II

SLATE-WRITING

Testimony of conjurers for genuineness of physical phenomena, especially slate-writing—Eglinton's performances and Spiritualist testimony to their genuineness—Account of a séance by Mr. C. C. Massey—Dr. Hodgson's criticism—Account of a conjuring trick—Remarks on the kind of observation required—Dr. Hodgson's analysis and collation of reports of séances—Accounts of a séance by Mr. G. A. Smith and Mr. Murray Templeton—Truesdell's imitation of slate-writing—Mr. S. J. Davey's pseudo-mediumship—Accounts by Mr. A. Podmore and Mr. J. M. Dodds—Summary of Davey's feats, and remarks on his "mediumship" . 204

CHAPTER III

DANIEL DUNGLAS HOME

His parentage, childhood, and career—Description of his person and character—His trance addresses—His clairvoyance—His physical manifestations—Ordinary half-dark séances—Vibration of the table—Movement of musical instruments, flowers, etc.—Exhibition of hands—Collation of two independent accounts by Mr. Rymer and Mr. Barlee of the same séance—Mr. Crookes' experiments with Home—Movement of the balance—Criticism of the evidence—Some defects pointed out—The device probably employed by Home to move the balance—Illustrations from other feats performed by Home himself, by S. J. Davey, and others—The floating of the lath similarly explained . . . 223

CHAPTER IV

WAS THERE HALLUCINATION?

In most cases the hypothesis is unnecessary—A few instances quoted in which fallacy of memory hardly seems sufficient explanation—Rev. T. Colley and Dr. Monck—Mr. St. George Stock and the choir-boys—Hallucina-

PAGE

tion merely a distortion or exaggeration of normal sense-perception—Illustrations quoted from figures seen at dark séances and "recognised" spirit photographs—Further illustrations from S.P.R. *Proceedings*, R. L. Stevenson, Dr. J. G. Stoney, Dr. Beard, Le Bon—Levitation of Home—Accounts by Robert Bell (in *Cornhill*), Mr. Crookes, Master of Lindsay, and others analysed, and sensory deception, conditioned by the dim light, indicated as the explanation—Elongation of Home—Account by the Master of Lindsay—Recent case of elongation by the Rev. C. J. M. Shaw—Fire ordeal with Home—Accounts by Mr. Crookes—Similar manifestation through another medium described by Mrs. Tebb—Recent cases in the South Seas and elsewhere—A case in Tahiti described by Professor Langley—Conclusion that all these manifestations are due to trickery, helped by illusion—The conditions of a dark or semi-dark séance specially favourable to illusion—Home and other mediums possibly gifted with unusual power to inspire such illusions . 244

CHAPTER V

THE MEDIUMSHIP OF STAINTON MOSES

Predisposition to belief in the marvellous present throughout the history of mysticism—Successful mediums have special power of inspiring confidence in themselves by prepossessing manner, by playing on the affections, by devotional and elevating discourse—Social position and good character most valuable means of inspiring confidence—Illustrations from the writer's own experience, and from that of others, of this confidence being abused—William Stainton Moses—His birth and career—His introduction to Spiritualism—Physical manifestations at his circles—Testimony of Dr. and Mrs. Speer and the medium himself—His communications from spirits, through writing or table-rapping—His *Spirit Teachings*—Extracts from the *Teachings*—Remarks on the problem presented by Mr. Moses' life—Suggested explanations . . 270

CHAPTER VI

AUTOMATISM

Mediums not commonplace impostors—The typical medium half or wholly believes in his own manifestations—Poltergeist children, magnetic somnambules and spirit mediums all alike belong to a pathologic type—This fact recognised sooner in France than elsewhere—Nature of reflex action—Various states of psychic dissociation, of which sleep and reverie are most familiar, favourable to automatic (reflex) action—Crystal visions comparable to dreams—Experiences in crystal visions of Mrs. Verrall, Mr. Keulemans, Miss Freer, and others—Auditory automatism—Motor automatism—Experiments by Professor Jastrow, Professor Newbold, Mr. Solomons, and others—Spontaneous motor automatism—Experiences of Mr. Tout—Personation of spirits—Experiences of Mr. Le Baron—Involuntary prophetic utterances—The unknown tongue . . . 289

CHAPTER VII

DREAM-CONSCIOUSNESS

Developed or permanent automatism symptomatic of abnormality—Physical indications of such abnormality—Psychical indications—Continued dreaming—Professor Janet's account of Achille's demoniac possession—

PAGE

Another case of Janet's; M. Ler and his spirit control—Janet's theory —Day-dreams—A case recorded by the writer; substitution of pseudo-possession for an attack of hysteria—M. Flournoy's observations—M. Michel Til's automatic messages—Flournoy's study of Hélène Smith—The reincarnation of Marie Antoinette and Simandini—Visits to Mars and converse with its inhabitants—The Martian language—Hélène's clairvoyance—Flournoy's explanation of her mediumship—Her physical manifestations—The problem of physical manifestations amongst private mediums generally—Can these actions be involuntary?—Instances of involuntary action in normal life in kleptomania, masked epilepsy, and various states of secondary consciousness, especially in hysteria—Janet's case of Meb, an hysterical patient, and her "apports"—The analogy of post-hypnotic suggestion—Danger of encouraging physical mediumship, as tending either to dishonesty or to grave abnormality 307

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRANCE UTTERANCES OF MRS. PIPER

Evidence for community of sensation, telepathy and clairvoyance in the past dubious and insufficient—Additional evidence of improved quality accumulated in recent years by S.P.R.—(*a*) By direct experiments, (*b*) by collection of spontaneous instances, (*c*) by recording trance utterances of Mrs. Piper and others—History of Mrs. Piper's mediumship—Professor Shaler's account of a séance with her—Precautions taken against fraud —Further testimony from Professor J. E. Carpenter and M. Paul Bourget—Nature of the information furnished—Contrast with the "clairvoyance" of Alexis Didier and Stainton Moses—Close resemblance to revelations of Cahagnet's subject, Adèle—Analysis of the evidence, and conclusion that it points to supernormal faculty (telepathy) but not to communication from the dead 329

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Retrospect—Origins of Spiritualism to be found, on the one hand, in Animal Magnetism and Alchemy, on the other, in Poltergeists and witchcraft—Its beginnings with the German somnambules—Its rapid spread in America, helped by the special conditions of the time and the people—Its slower growth in this country—Involuntary action and trance personation explained by modern psychology—The foundation of Spiritualism now shifted—Mr. Myers' theory of transcendent faculties inherent in the soul —The strength and the weakness of his position—The evidence for such faculties, even for telepathy, at present insufficient; but the case calls for further investigation, and the history of Mesmerism furnishes a warning against hasty judgments 348

INDEX 363

MODERN SPIRITUALISM

BOOK III

SPIRITUALISM IN ENGLAND

SPIRITUALISM IN ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

TABLE-TURNING AND TABLE-TALKING, 1853

AS we have already seen, the mesmeric movement in England ran for many years almost entirely on rationalist lines.[1] *The Zoist*, indeed, remained as the chief organ of the movement up to 1856, and the purely naturalistic views therein advocated found general favour. Rumours of the trance utterances of A. J. Davis and of Cahagnet's somnambules had, however, reached this country, and at least one English somnambule, Emma, the subject of Dr. Haddock, had seen visions of a future life and of spiritual things not unlike those recorded of Adele Maginot.[2] Neither Haddock himself, nor Gregory, who discusses the visions and compares them with those recorded by Cahagnet,[3] is prepared to accept the clairvoyant utterances as authentic revelations; but neither, on the other hand, is willing to dismiss them as unquestionably subjective. That Haddock's own mind was not made up on the subject he frankly confesses; and the mere fact that he thinks it worth while to devote several pages of his book to the account of these ecstatic visions clearly indicates that he set some value on such records. But, at any rate, if some of the English Mesmerists in the early fifties held it an open question whether such clairvoyant utterances had any reference to objective realities, there was as yet no school or sect, as in America and Germany, to adopt without hesitation the spiritualistic interpretation of these and kindred phenomena. It was not, indeed, until 1853 that the new doctrine obtained

[1] See Book I. chap. viii.
[2] See *Somnolism and Psycheism*, 2nd edition (1851), pp. 181–8, 232, etc.
[3] *Letters on Animal Magnetism*, 1851, pp. 223–7.

any real foothold in this country. In October, 1852, one Stone, a lecturer on the recently discovered art of "electro-biology"—a process for inducing hypnotism by gazing at metallic discs, which had been imported into Europe from America in the previous year—brought with him from the United States the first Spiritualist medium, Mrs. Hayden. Mrs. Hayden was a lady of some education, the wife of W. R. Hayden, sometime editor of the *Star Spangled Banner*. Mr. Hayden accompanied her on her mission. A few weeks later another medium, Mrs. Roberts, accompanied by her husband, "Dr." Roberts, came to London also from the United States. Both mediums advertised their professional services;[1] and the former lady achieved no small social success, having her rooms crowded with visitors, at a minimum fee of half a guinea each, and being in great demand for evening parties and private sittings.

The manifestations at these professional séances consisted mainly of answers to questions, frequently put mentally, by means of the raps. The procedure was the same as that already described as prevailing in America.[2] The questioner took a printed alphabet and ran his pen or finger down it, until a rap indicated a letter; the proceeding was then repeated until a word or a sentence was obtained. Occasionally the answers were given by tilting of the table; there were also sometimes rotation and other movements of the table. Involuntary writing was rarely resorted to, no doubt because answers to mental questions could not be readily given by this means. Of other phenomena at this period we have little trace; the alleged movement of tables without contact rests exclusively, so far as I can discover, on second-hand or anonymous evidence.[3]

Of Mrs. Hayden's performances we have many accounts in the periodical literature of the time. In the London Press, generally, as might have been anticipated, the per-

[1] Here is Mrs. Roberts' advertisement on the front page of the *Times* for April 16th, 1853: "Spiritual Manifestations and Communications from departed friends, which so much gratify serious enlightened minds, exemplified daily at . . ." It should be added that later in the year, as we learn from a letter written by Hayden to the New York *Spiritual Telegraph*, the *Times* refused to insert such advertisements.

[2] See Book II. chap. i.

[3] See, *e.g.*, *Zoist*, vol. xi. p. 323, where the Rev. G. Sandby gives an account of table-moving without contact, related to him by a clergyman, whose children were the mediums. The anonymous author of *A Practical Investigation into the Truth of Clairvoyance* (London, 1854), mentions that he had obtained involuntary writing through Mrs. Hayden's mediumship, and had also witnessed at her rooms movements of the table without contact. But no details are given, and the writer was obviously quite uncritical.

formances of the professional medium met with little favour. *Household Words* was first in the field, with an article ridiculing the whole matter.[1] In the following year *Blackwood's Magazine*,[2] the *National Miscellany*,[3] and other papers took a similar line; whilst G. H. Lewes, in the *Leader*,[4] showed how the trick was done, and related that by carefully emphasised hesitation at the appropriate letters he had held a conversation with one of the Eumenides, receiving much information, not to be found in any classical dictionary, about his interlocutor's domestic relations; and had induced the table to confess, in reply to his mental questions, that Mrs. Hayden was an impostor, and that the ghost of Hamlet's father had seventeen noses.

In the April number of the *Zoist* is an article by an anonymous correspondent, describing his experiences at Mrs. Hayden's. He noted that when the alphabet was placed under the table, so as to hide it from the view of the medium, the "spirits" were unable to give correct answers, and satisfied himself that there was no other intelligence at work than that of the medium herself. The raps he supposed to be produced by striking the edge of the boot-sole against a chair-leg. In a later number[5] Elliotson himself, who had attended two or three sittings, has an article on "The Departed Spirits," in which he endorses his contributor's views, and relates further failures when the alphabet was concealed during the experiment.[6]

But apart from Mrs. Hayden's fashionable clients, there were many persons, and some not inferior in critical acumen probably to the writers just cited, who found themselves unable to explain all that they had witnessed by such simple methods. An article appeared in *Chambers's Journal*,[7] in which the writer, understood to be Robert Chambers himself, describes a visit to Mrs. Hayden. He obtained the usual answers under the usual conditions, but adds, "I have seen the alphabet used successfully behind the medium's back, when only visitors were present." Chambers paid visits to two other mediums, Mrs. Roberts and a young woman, the subject of a mesmeric "doctor," E. Hardinge, and witnessed table-turning and automatic writing. He obviously feels

[1] *Ghost of the Cock Lane Ghost*, November 20th, 1852.
[2] May, 1853. [3] May 5th, 1853. [4] March 12th, 1853.
[5] Vol. xi., July, 1853, p. 191, etc.
[6] Amongst those who visited Mrs. Hayden were several well-known scientific men, including Professor Huxley (see *Life and Letters*, vol. i. p. 419).
[7] May 21st, 1853.

some difficulty in formulating an opinion on their performances; but on the whole inclines to think that the phenomena are natural and by no means remarkable, and the mediums self-deceived. In a note written a few weeks later,[1] however, he expresses a more decided opinion. In the interval the phenomena had occurred in his own family circle, where he believed trickery out of the question. The table had moved round and had tilted out answers to questions on matters known only to himself: "I am satisfied, as before," he writes, "that the phenomena are natural, but to take them in I think we shall have to widen somewhat our ideas of the extent and character of what is natural."

Again, in the *Critic*,[2] in a long letter signed "M.A., Cantab."—which may probably be interpreted as A. W. Hobson, of St. John's College, Cambridge—the writer expresses his conviction that the explanations put forward by Lewes and others are clearly inadequate. This opinion, however, appears to be founded on the fact that correct answers were obtained when the alphabet was held in such a position that Mrs. Hayden could not see the letters; but it is not stated whether she could have seen the hand or the pen used to point at the letters, or whether Mr. Hayden, as was commonly the case, was present in the room.

But probably the weightiest testimony is that given by Professor de Morgan. In a letter dated July, 1853, he thus describes his experiences:—[3]

"Mrs. Hayden, the American *medium*, came to my house, and we had a sitting of more than two hours. She had not been there many minutes before some slight ticking raps were heard *in* the table apparently. The raps answered by the alphabet (pointing to the letters on a card), one after the other (a rap or two coming at the letter), to the name of a sister of my wife, who died seventeen years ago. After some questioning, she (I speak the spirit hypothesis, though I have no theory on the subject) was asked whether I might ask a question. 'Yes,' affirmative rap. I said, 'May I ask it mentally?' 'Yes.' 'May Mrs. Hayden hold up both her hands while I do it?' 'Yes.' Mrs. H. did so, and *in my mind*, without speaking, I put a question, and suggested that the answer should be in one word, which I thought of. I then took the card[4] and *got*

[1] *Chambers's Journal*, June 11th, 1853. [2] May 16th, 1853.
[3] *Memoirs of Augustus de Morgan*, pp. 221, 222. London, 1882.
[4] In an account published in 1863, in the Preface to *From Matter to Spirit*, page xli., Mr. de Morgan states that in this experiment he put a book upright before the alphabet, and that Mrs. Hayden, seated six feet from the book, "could see neither my hand nor my eyes, nor at what rate I was going through the letters." It does not appear whether this later account is based on contemporary notes.

that word letter by letter—C H E S S. The question was whether she remembered a letter she once wrote to me, and what was the subject? Presently came *my father* (*ob.* 1816), and after some conversation I went on as follows:—

"'Do you remember a periodical I have in my head?' 'Yes.' 'Do you remember the epithets therein applied to yourself?' 'Yes.' 'Will you give me the initials of them by the card?' 'Yes.' I then began pointing to the alphabet, with a book to conceal the card, Mrs. H. being at the opposite side of a round table (large) and a bright lamp between us. I pointed letter by letter till I came to F, which I thought should be the first initial. No rapping. The people around me said, 'You have passed it; there was a rapping at the beginning.' I went back and heard the rapping distinctly at C. This puzzled me, but in a moment I saw what it was. The sentence was begun by the rapping agency earlier than I intended. I allowed C to pass, and then got D T F O C, being the initials of the consecutive words which I remembered to have been applied to my father in an old review published in 1817, which no one in the room had ever heard of but myself. C D T F O C was all right, and when I got so far I gave it up, perfectly satisfied that something or somebody, or some spirit, was reading *my thoughts*. This and the like went on for nearly three hours, during a great part of which Mrs. H. was busy reading the *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which she had never seen before. . . ."

Of those who were convinced of the agency of spirits we shall speak later. But there were other persons of some weight, such as Dr. Daniel, Sir J. Lillie, Sir Charles Style, Dr. Westland Marston, who, although unwilling to commit themselves to any definite theory, yet held the phenomena worthy of serious investigation.[1]

It was not, however, the manifestations of professional mediumship, necessarily limited in their area, which attracted most attention at this time. An epidemic of table-turning had broken out on the Continent in the autumn of 1852, and spread, though tardily, to this country in the early months of 1853. It was found that not only would tables and hats rotate and execute movements of various kinds without the apparent volition or control of those taking part in the experiments, but that answers to questions—and even on occasion information not apparently known to any of those present—could be obtained by this method, a tilt of the table being substituted for the professional medium's rap. Mrs. Hayden's performances had been confined to those who

[1] See *Facts and Fantasies*, by H. Spicer (pp. 14-16). London, 1853; and *Mesmerism proved True*, by the Rev. C. H. Townshend. London, 1854.

could pay her price for a sitting, and had been little heard of in the provinces. But table-turning was within the reach of all, and seems to have been practised as assiduously by all classes of society in Bath, Manchester, or Edinburgh, as in London itself.

The table-turning mania reached such dimensions that in June of this year several scientific men, who had for the most part left the professional medium to perform unmolested, thought it desirable to intervene. A committee of four medical men held some séances, the results of which they communicated to the *Medical Times and Gazette*.[1] Briefly they found, as the result of several trials, that when no expectations were formed of any probable result, and the attention of those sitting round the table was diverted by conversation or otherwise, the table did not move at all. Again, no results followed when half the sitters expected the rotation to take place in one direction and half in another. But when expectation was allowed free play, and especially if the direction of the probable movement was indicated beforehand, the table began to rotate after a few minutes, although no one of the sitters was conscious of exercising any effort at all. The conclusion formed was that the motion was due to muscular action, mostly exercised unconsciously.

In the early part of the same month a conversazione was held in the Manchester Athenæum, under the presidency of the Rev. H. Jones, for the purpose of table-turning. Seven tables were employed, of which four were made to turn. The most successful operators were a party of four ladies; and Braid, who was present, suggested that the popular theory of electricity might be tested by placing a circle of brass wire on the surface of the table, and letting the four ladies who had just been so successful in causing the table to rotate when their fingers rested on it hold each a loop of the wire connected with the coil on the table. The experiment was tried, and naturally the table remained at rest. The ladies then discarded the wire, and again placed the tips of their fingers on the wood, when the table moved as before.[2] In an appendix to his *Hypnotic Therapeutics*, dated a few weeks later, Braid refers to this experiment and the other proceedings at the conversazione, and points the moral that the movement, when there is no reason to suspect the good faith of the operators, is probably due to unconscious (ideomotor) action. He adds that at all the

[1] June 11th, 1853.
[2] From the *Manchester Guardian*, quoted in the *Times*, 13th June, 1853.

experiments at which he had assisted someone had always announced beforehand the direction in which the table might be expected to move, and had thus helped to bring the unconscious expectations of the sitters into unison.

But the most important contribution to the subject was made by Faraday.[1] Faraday, like other thoughtful men, was aghast at the hold which the table-turning mania had gained on all classes of society, and at the loose thinking and presumptuous ignorance which the popular explanations revealed. Amongst the various theories commonly offered to account for the movements of the table he mentions spirits, electricity, magnetism, "attraction" of some kind, and the rotation of the earth! By the use of some ingenious apparatus Faraday showed conclusively that the movements were due to muscular action, and to that alone, exercised in most cases without the consciousness or volition of the sitters. Perhaps the most effective of his test apparatus was the following. He prepared two small flat boards, a few inches square, placed several glass rollers about the thickness of an ordinary pencil between them, and fastened the whole together with a couple of indiarubber bands in such a manner that the upper board would slide under lateral pressure to a limited extent over the lower one. A light index, consisting of a haystalk or a piece of paper, was fastened to the apparatus so as to betray the least movement of the upper board on the lower one. It was found that, in all cases, the upper board moved before the lower board, which rested on the table, showing that the fingers of the operator moved the table, and not—as the sitters themselves supposed—the table the fingers. But the most striking proof that the movement was due to a muscular effort of which the performer was quite unconscious is that when the sitters learned the meaning of the index and kept their attention fixed upon it, no movement followed; "when the parties saw the index, it remained very steady; when it was hidden from them, or they looked away from it, it wavered about, though they believed that they always pressed directly downward."

Later in the same year the whole subject was dealt with by Dr. Carpenter, in the *Quarterly Review*, and the same explanation—the unconscious exercise by the experimenter, under the influence of a dominant idea, of the muscular

[1] See his letter on "Table-turning" originally published in the *Times* of June 30th, 1853, reproduced with some additional matter in the *Athenæum* of July 2nd.

effort necessary to bring about the desired result — was applied not merely to table-turning, but to many of the phenomena of odylic force and electro-biology, including Mr. Rutter's magnetometer and Dr. Mayo's odometer.[1]

But the idea of discerning a mysterious force in this drawing-room diversion was too easy and too fascinating to be so lightly dismissed. The point of view of the average muddle-headed man is amusingly illustrated in an anonymous pamphlet published in the autumn of this year, entitled *Table-turning and Table-talking considered in connection with the dictates of reason and common sense.*[2] The writer finds himself constrained to record his dissent from Faraday's explanation. "It is not," he contends, "with learned theories we wish to have to do . . . we would simply bring common sense to bear on these strange matters." He then proceeds to point out—to Faraday—that "there is a subtle matter which pervades all nature," known in some of its manifestations as electricity. It is true we know very little about it; but for all that, or perhaps because of that, it seems to the writer not unreasonable to suggest that electricity makes the table move. A more apt illustration of the arrogance of sheer ignorance, on which Faraday had animadverted, could hardly be found. But it was with most persons, perhaps, less arrogance than indolence which led to the rejection of Faraday's explanation. It involved a much less mental effort to ascribe the whole business to a mysterious "force," and thus relieve the mind of the task of grappling with the problem in detail, than to exercise the faculties in the attempt to understand other people's experiments in the region of concrete weights and measurements. So the writer in the *National Miscellany*, already referred to, who had scoffed at Mrs. Hayden's performances, is satisfied that the phenomenon of table-moving is "very curious, and at present unexplained; it is supposed to have some connection with magnetism, or electricity, or galvanism . . . or with Reichenbach's odyle." The most popular pamphlet on the subject, which claims to have gone through one hundred and ten editions in the course of the year, is entitled *Table-turning by Animal Magnetism demonstrated*,[3] and founds its theory apparently on a series of experiments conducted by a Mr. Bates, of the Nautical Academy, who found that the movements of the table were facilitated when it was insulated by

[1] *Quarterly Review*, Sept., 1853. See also *A few sober words of Table-talk about the Spirits*, etc., by John Prichard, F.R.C.S. Leamington, 1853.
[2] Bath, 1853. [3] London, 1853. Anonymous.

glass tumblers or sheets of gutta-percha. Again, Mr. Charles Koch, M.A., Ph.D.,[1] explains the movements by supposing that the circle of experimenters constitutes a life-electric battery, from whom the table becomes charged with vital or "electro-odycal" force, and is thus made as obedient to the will as a member of the human body.[2]

It need not be supposed that Elliotson and his colleagues were backward in welcoming this striking confirmation of their theories. The number of the *Zoist* following that in which the exposure of Mrs. Hayden occurred contains articles from the Rev. G. Sandby, Rev. C. H. Townshend, and Elliotson himself on the table-turning manifestations. Sandby writes from Paris to say that the whole city is excited over the dancing of the tables. He had himself investigated, and considered that "the alleged facts are established beyond a doubt, and that the controversy is at an end."[3] He points out that the motion of the table is constantly produced after a very brief interval, so that unconscious expectation can hardly be supposed to have time to operate; moreover, not only is there no consciousness of muscular exertion, however great the weight moved, and however violent the movement, but the mind is actively on the alert to guard against such an objection. Further, he points out that all agree in describing the curious sensations in the fingers, arms, and occasionally the head, produced by table-turning. Sandby himself had experienced unusual sensations in the tips of his fingers. He concludes, therefore, that "this action of the table, induced by continued contact with a chain of human fingers, is nothing but simple Mesmerism, developing itself in an unexpected phase."[4]

Townshend follows to the same effect. He also had felt unusual sensations after table-turning, tingling in the tips of the fingers, and a peculiar fatigue as if he had been engaged in mesmerising. He is satisfied that the phenomena cannot be wholly explained by muscular action. In his book, *Mesmerism proved True*, published a few months later, he expands his views on the analogy of the table-turning

[1] *Table-moving and Table-talking reduced to natural causes.* Bath and London. No date. ? 1853.

[2] It is curious to find Mr. Maskelyne rowing in this galley. In an interview published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (April 20th, 1885), the correctness of which he afterwards acknowledged, he states that on one occasion, without the presence of a medium, he and a few friends produced movements of a table which he was satisfied could not be accounted for by muscular action alone. He explicitly rejects Faraday's explanation, and inclines to believe in some psychic or nerve force.

[3] *Zoist*, vol. xi. p. 176.

[4] Page 179.

phenomena with those of Mesmerism, and even suggests that the rappings may be explained by "some irregular disengagement of Zoogen from the System" of the medium.[1] J. W. Jackson, in the pages of the *Zoist*, offers a similar explanation of the raps, suggesting that they are probably "neuro-electric or odic phenomena."[2]

Elliotson, though more cautious in forming his opinion, is inclined to agree with those expressed by his friends. He had himself met with little success in his attempts to investigate the phenomena; but from what he had heard from others, and especially from the anomalous physical sensations described, and from the conviction entertained by the most honest experimenters that the movements were not of their making, he infers that "there probably is true movement of the tables independent of muscular force."[3] He still, however, apparently adheres to his earlier opinion that the professional rapping mediums were fraudulent.

There is obviously no great difference in the mental attitude of those who thus adopted the phenomena because they lent support to the theory of Animal Magnetism and those who welcomed them as illustrating their own peculiar views of spiritual agency. Both alike exemplified the prepotent influence of dominant ideas in shaping belief. And if the Spiritualist interpretation had less ostentation of scientific method, and its exponents were at times less temperate in their advocacy, they had at least the advantage of expounding a theory which was sufficiently elastic to include the whole of the facts to be explained. This, indeed, is the line of argument which appears to have commended itself to Dr. Charles Cowan, who points out that all "the modern scientific solutions"—and in these scientific solutions he includes the various electric, magnetic, and odylic theories just described—are inadequate to the facts. There is one cause to which all the phenomena point. "Satanic Agency . . . is at least equal to the production of the effects," whilst by the testimony of Scripture it is clearly indicated as a *vera causa*.[4]

The spiritualistic interpretation, indeed, found its strongest advocates in an unexpected quarter. There was a little group of evangelical clergymen, some of them already distinguished for their intemperate attacks on Romanist doctrines, who hastened to discern in the innocent antics

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 197. [2] *Zoist*, vol. xi. p. 427. [3] *Ibid.*, vol. xi. p. 196.
[4] *Thoughts on Satanic Influence, or Modern Spiritualism considered.* London, 1854.

of the table signs of the coming of Antichrist. On the 16th of June the Rev. N. S. Godfrey, of Leeds, with his wife and his curate, held a meeting for table-turning in the presence of the national schoolmaster and others. After various unsuccessful attempts to induce the table to confess that it was moved by diabolic agency, Mr. Godfrey continues:—

"I was now prepared for a further experiment of a far more solemn character. I whispered to the Schoolmaster to bring a small Bible, and to lay it on the table when I should tell him. I then caused the table to revolve rapidly and gave the signal. *The Bible was gently laid on the table, and it instantly stopped!* We were horror-struck."

After supper, the experiment was resumed, and the following test was tried: "If there be not a devil, knock twice; to our horror the leg slowly rose and knocked twice." It need hardly be said that these appalling disclosures were made public without delay.[1]

Thereafter Mr. Godfrey held two or three more sittings, the results of which are detailed in a later pamphlet.[2] On the 4th of July the table admitted, in answer to leading questions, that it was moved by the spirit of a dead man, a lost soul, sent from hell by the devil, for the express purpose of deceiving the circle there assembled, and doomed to return to hell when the nightly task was accomplished. In answer to further questions it was explained that the spirit who had manifested at the previous sitting was not a human spirit, but a fallen angel. On July 18th there came one who claimed to be the spirit of a parishioner (whose name was given, and subsequently verified in the parish register), dead some months previously and buried by Mr. Godfrey himself. This spirit confessed that he had only once before been in the schoolroom (where the séance was held), and then not to attend Sunday-school, but for the carnal delights of a tea-meeting. In earth life he had generally attended the Wesleyan chapel, but now deeply regretted he had not paid more heed to Mr. Godfrey's counsel.

Later in the year the Rev. E. Gillson, of Bath, again after *one* sitting, published the results of his experience.[3] After

[1] *Table-moving tested, and proved to be the result of Satanic Agency.* London and Leeds, 1853. [2] *Table-turning, the Devil's Modern Masterpiece.*
[3] *Table-talking: disclosures of Satanic Wonders and Prophetic Signs.* Bath, 1853.

ascertaining that his interlocutor was a departed spirit, who expected in the course of ten years to be bound with Satan and all his crew and cast into the abyss, Mr. Gillson proceeds with his catechism as follows:—

"I then asked, 'Where are Satan's headquarters? Are they in England?' There was a slight movement.
"'Are they in France?' A violent movement.
"'Are they in Spain?' Similar agitation.
"'Are they at Rome?' The table seemed literally frantic."

Another clergyman of the same school, the Rev. R. W. Dibdin, is inclined to adopt a slightly different interpretation. The spirits at work, he contends, are not those of departed men or women, but of devils.[1] The revelations which he received in answer to leading questions were all of the same general type. The devils all confessed the Pope as the true head of the Church; recommended prayer to the Virgin Mary; taught that Socinius was a good man, and Luther the reverse; that salvation is by faith and works, not by faith alone, and so on.

But whether spirits of men or devils, all these clergymen were agreed that the motive power and the aim were alike diabolic. The inconceivable Godfrey even hazards the conjecture. "Can it be that this is the beginning of Satan's last struggle, that *on the imposition of hands* the table is endued with power *from the Devil*, as the Lord's servants, *on the imposition of hands*, were, *in the Apostles' days*, endued with power *from on high*? I merely ask, 'Can it be?'"[2]

And in a later work[3] he elaborates the theory that the table-tilting and other marvels are the signs foretold in the Bible which should usher in the reign of Antichrist, and finds in the various economic and social ideals commonly associated with Spiritualism in America strong confirmation of his suspicions. "To prepare the way," he writes, "for that false millennium, nation is to be induced to rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom . . . to unite mankind in a universal brotherhood, and establish a kingdom in the name of Love and Justice."[4]

A brother clergyman, the Rev. F. Close (afterwards Dean of Carlisle), gave the true explanation of this extraordinary

[1] [illegible] (delivered Nov. 8th, 1853). Reprinted, London, 1854.
[2] [illegible] The italics are Godfrey's own.
[3] [illegible]
[4] [illegible]

readiness to accept these trivial performances and to explain them as diabolic. He points out that these clergymen belonged to a school which for generations past had been preoccupied with the biblical prophecies, and looking incessantly for the signs of their fulfilment.[1] As one of them puts it: "I regard these things myself as signs of the time. *I have for several years expected some decided manifestation of Satanic power.*"[2] It is to this constant looking for signs and wonders that Close attributes various previous secessions from the orthodox Churches, especially those of the Plymouth Brethren and the Irvingites. That it was responsible for the attitude of these evangelical clergymen can hardly be doubted. One of the most naive expressions of this attitude is to be found in a pamphlet by a layman of the same school, one R. C. Morgan, published apparently about this time, which, like many other publications of the kind, reached a circulation of several thousands of copies.[3] Morgan begins by saying that he does not propose to inquire whether the manifestations are genuine or not, or even whether they are natural or not. He contents himself with asking two questions: "Are physical manifestations of Satanic power *possible?* If *possible*, is it *probable* that in the nineteenth century such manifestations should appear?" And he finds no difficulty in giving an emphatic affirmative to both questions. One illustration of his method of argument must suffice. He quotes, as one of the signs to be looked for in the last days, the following passage from Nahum:—[4]

"The chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken. The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall justle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings."

He then tells his readers, "The next time you see a railway train . . . ask yourself if this is not 'the day of his preparation'"; and points out in a note that railway sleepers are generally made of fir, and that the carriages of a train constantly "justle" one another in coming to a standstill.

Before taking leave of Mr. Godfrey and his colleagues I must give one more quotation. The phenomena, that

[1] *The Testers Tested; or Table-moving . . . not diabolical.* London, 1853.
[2] Rev. W. Vincent, in a Sermon on "Satanic Influence," quoted by Close, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
[3] *An Inquiry into Table Miracles.* Bath and London. No date.
[4] ii. 3, 4.

ingenious writer points out, "appear to be whatever the investigator supposes them to be,"[1] a generalisation which he uses in disparagement of the attempts made by Faraday and others to reduce the phenomena to physical laws. Contemporary critics, however, applied the same principle to his own experiments, and pointed out that *Gulliver's Travels* and *Hoyle on Whist* were as efficacious as more sacred books in staying the gyrations of the table, if employed with fitting solemnity.[2]

Beside absurdities such as these, the ordinary Spiritualist interpretation might almost seem the verdict of sober common-sense. But though, as already said, there were many who, like Robert Chambers and de Morgan, had been profoundly impressed by what they had seen at Mrs. Hayden's, the seed then sown did not in most cases bear fruit until some years later, and Spiritualism found at this period few avowed advocates. One of the earliest converts was Sir Charles Isham. Another was Dr. Ashburner, who addressed a long letter in defence of the Spiritualist position to Mr. G. J. Holyoake, the well-known Secularist, which appeared in the *Reasoner* in June, 1853.[3] Apart from the writer's account of his personal experience, to be quoted immediately, the letter is chiefly interesting for an attempt to base a materialistic explanation of spirits on the hypothetical phenomena of odic force and Animal Magnetism. "I do not contend," he writes, "for immaterial essences, for my limited capacities allow me to conceive the most highly refined essence to be only a form of material being." A train of thought is, he explains, composed of currents of globules; and the human will, also made of globules, can be seen by clairvoyants streaming visibly from the brain. Ashburner went to Mrs. Hayden, he tells us, strongly prepossessed against the subject. He watched Mrs. Hayden attentively, however, whilst a friend was receiving a communication, and could detect no sign of trickery. But it is obvious that he failed to realise the crucial points of the experiment, and his account of the precautions taken does not carry conviction. When his own turn came—

"Having successively placed myself in various chairs, in order that I might narrowly watch Mrs. Hayden in all her proceedings, I at last seated myself, relatively to her, in such a position as to feel

[1] *The Devil's Modern Masterpiece*, p. 47.

[2] Townshend, *Mesmerism proved True*, p. 192; Koch, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

[3] This letter, or the greater part of it, is reprinted in Dr. Ashburner's *Philosophy of Animal Magnetism*, pp. 304–320. London, 1867.

convinced that I could not be deceived; and, in fact, I was at last obliged to conclude that it was weakness or folly to suspect her of any fraud or trickery. . . .

"In order to obtain an experience of the phenomena in the fairest manner, I asked Mrs. Hayden to inform me whether it was requisite to think of one particular spirit with whom I wished to converse. 'Yes.' 'Well, I am now thinking of one.' It was the spirit of my father whom I wished to enlighten me. No raps on the table. I had anticipated an immediate reply, but there was for a while none. Mrs. Hayden asked if there was any spirit present who knows Dr. Ashburner. Immediately, close to my elbow, on the table there were two distinct successions of gentle rapping sounds. The next question was, 'Was the spirit he wished to converse with present?' 'No.' 'Was there any one present who would endeavour to bring it?' 'Yes.' 'Are the spirits who rap near Dr. Ashburner friends of whom he is thinking?' 'No.' 'Will they give their names?' 'Yes.' These replies were signified by rappings to questions put, some audibly, some mentally. Mrs. Hayden suggested that I should take up the alphabet, which was printed on a card. I took the card into my hand and pointed at each individual letter with the end of a porcupine quill—my friend Mr. Hoyland, the gentleman of the house, kindly undertaking to put down on paper for me the letters distinguished by the raps. When I arrived at a letter which the spirit desired to indicate, a rapping took place; but at all the other letters there was a complete silence. In this manner I obtained the letters successively ANN HURRY, the name of one of the most beautiful and accomplished, as well as pious and excellent persons I had ever known. I had not seen her since 1812. She married two years after, and died in 1815. My father and most of the members of the family had been on terms of the greatest intimacy with several branches of the Hurry family, and I had, in youth and childhood, known Ann and her cousins as companions and playfellows. By the aid of the telegraphic signals I have endeavoured to describe I conversed for some time with the charming companion of my early years; I learned very interesting particulars relating to her happy abode in the spirit world. My curiosity had been excited by the different sounds produced by rappings that I heard close to those made by my friend Ann. I asked for the name of the spirit they represented. The name which came out by the letters indicated on the alphabet was ELIZABETH MAURICE, another companion of the childhood of myself and my brother and sister—another almost angelic being while on earth, but now with her cousin Ann, an inhabitant of the third sphere of Paradise. The authoress of the 'Invalid's Book' and some other works testifying to a pure, gentle, and refined taste conversed with me awhile; and at last a louder and more decided signal was made to me from the middle of the table. The name I obtained by the telegraphic raps was that of

my father. I asked him to communicate to me the date on which he quitted this world for the spirit home, and the raps indicated '7th September, 1798.' I asked him where the event took place, and I obtained the answer, 'At Bombay.' I asked his age at the time, with many other questions, the replies to which were all quite correct. I kept up mentally a long conversation with him on subjects deeply interesting. . . ."

The séance ended with a communication from Dr. Ashburner's father, which is quoted in full. At subsequent séances communications are alleged to have been given indicating a knowledge of Ashburner's movements and private affairs, and full conviction shortly followed.

Another convert of the same uncritical temper was Robert Owen, the veteran Socialist, at this time in his eighty-third year. Owen had several sittings with Mrs. Hayden and various private mediums, at which he received communications alleged to come, amongst others, from the Duke of Kent, who had been one of the earliest and most influential supporters of his social schemes. The man who in middle life had not hesitated to risk the ruin of all his hopes by proclaiming from a public platform, when he held that honesty required such an avowal, his conviction of the futility and mischievousness of all the religions of the world, was not likely in his old age to be backward in proclaiming his adhesion to a new gospel. The advent of a spiritual kingdom, based upon justice and brotherhood, was a prospect which had filled the pious Godfrey with horror. But Owen, throughout his fourscore years, had been looking with the simple faith of a child for the coming of just such a millennium, and now at the last he saw in this new movement promise of a fulfilment ampler than he had dared to dream. He hastened to publish, in the columns of his organ, the *Rational Quarterly Review*, a formal profession of his new faith, and of the grounds on which it rested.[1] And in the following year (1854) he brought out the first part of *The New Existence of Man upon Earth*, the scope of which is sufficiently indicated by its opening sentences:—

"God now commands all nations, through the new manifestations of Spirits from superior Spheres, to prepare for universal peace, that

[1] He also produced, as a separate pamphlet, in the autumn of this year, a manifesto entitled *The Future of the Human Race; or a great, glorious, and peaceful Revolution, to be effected through the agency of departed spirits of good and superior men and women.* In an appendix to this pamphlet he gave detailed accounts of some sittings with mediums, in continuation of those already published in the *Rational Review*.

man may commence on earth a new existence, for which the late extraordinary progress in material, mental, and spiritual knowledge has been the forerunner. . . . The spirits of just men made perfect will accomplish this high task for humanity."

Scattered throughout the country, moreover, there appear to have been other converts of less note, though, as no Spiritualist periodical came into existence until two years later, it is difficult to obtain full information at this period as to the spread of the movement.[1] At Keighley there was published in the autumn of this year a small pamphlet, *Table-moving extraordinary, or a Sermon and a quantity of poetry given, letter by letter, by table-rapping.* The circle consisted of thirteen persons, apparently all men, all of whom sign the account. They received communications by the raps from various persons known to them in life, and specially from one John Mason, of Embsay, near Skipton, described as "a most respectable individual," who, when alive, had occasionally preached in the New Church, or Swedenborgian chapel, at Keighley. This John Mason, by means of the table, gave the circle a sermon, taking as his text Revelation xxii. 12. The sermon, though mercifully short (it occupies less than four pages duodecimo), since it was rapped out letter by letter must have occupied more time in delivery than its intrinsic merits, when considered in cold print, would seem to warrant. At other sittings some poetry was dictated by the spirit of Robert Burns, but in a dialect unknown to Scotland.

It will be noted that the private medium in this case—John Hardacre by name—had not advanced so far as to receive communications through automatic writing. But though writing "under control" had not yet become so prominent a feature of the manifestations as it was destined to become later, it was not unknown even at this early period. We hear, from a Spiritualist source, it is true, of a little girl of four at Ealing who had become a writing medium, and had even written Latin, though, of course, ignorant of that language.[2] Robert Chambers, in the article already referred to, mentions at his visit to Dr. and Mrs. Roberts a slate and pencil lying on the table, though they were not apparently brought into use on that occasion.

[1] In May, 1853, there appeared the first (and last) number of *The Spirit World*, proprietor, W. R. Hayden. This is the only periodical of which I can find any mention at this time.

[2] Letter from W. R. Hayden, dated Sept. 23rd, 1853, published in *Telegraph Papers*, vol. ii. p. 466 (New York).

At his visit to a third medium, however, a "sickly young woman" of English birth, he obtained answers to his questions in writing which was alleged to be automatic. The commencement of the proceedings was not, indeed, of good omen. Chambers asked the gentleman who controlled the séance and acted as magnetiser, a mesmeric "doctor" named Hardinge, whether he might not ask a mental question—a common practice when rapping only was concerned. Permission was granted; but the "spirit" controlling the medium at once wrote through her hand, "I told you before, I do not like a mental question; ask it aloud." When this condition was complied with written communications of a sermonlike consistency flowed freely. This same Dr. Hardinge, in the early part of the following year, delivered a course of lectures at the Literary and Scientific Institution, Portman Square, which were published shortly afterwards.[1] From these lectures, which are largely of an autobiographical character, we learn that Hardinge had been for some years a lecturer on Mesmerism and Electrobiology, and that he undertook to cure epilepsy, hysteria, and all nervous diseases. Dr. and Mrs. Roberts, the American mediums, in the winter of 1852–3, introduced themselves to him at a course of lectures he was then giving on Electrobiology. After witnessing their phenomena, he soon became convinced, was taught by spirits of the seventh sphere that epilepsy was demoniac possession, and enabled by their instructions to cure it. Eventually a member of his own household—the young woman referred to by Dr. Chambers, who later appears on the stage as Mrs. Hardinge—was controlled by the spirits of various dead friends, who wrote through her hand. Several lengthy communications of the usual type are quoted in the lectures. At the time when Robert Chambers paid his first visit Hardinge had with him another medium, a young man suffering from demoniac possession, called Julius Hartegilligan. The demon in this case appears to have prevailed against Hardinge's influence, for a few weeks later Julius Hartegilligan made his appearance at Cheltenham, habited in a white linen robe girdled with scarlet, and equipped with a crimson mantle and a purple cap, in the character of the Jewish Messiah, and thereafter disappeared from the history of Spiritualism.[2]

Hardinge himself appears to have been sincere, and

[1] *A Course of Lectures*, etc. London, 1854.

[2] *Cheltenham Free Press* of July 30th, quoted in the *Family Herald*, Sept. 3rd, 1853.

Chambers' brief notice of him corroborates, as far as it goes, the impression derived from his published lectures, that he looked upon Spiritualism less as a means of making money than as a source of religious consolation and of guidance in his profession as a mesmeric healer.

Apart from the fact that his book gives us a glimpse of one of the earliest professional writing mediums in this country, it is of interest because it would appear that it was largely through Hardinge and his medium that Chambers' attention was drawn to the subject. Hardinge records a visit paid to Chambers' house, Chilcotes, Hampstead, at which the usual phenomena were obtained, on the 29th April, 1853, immediately after the writing of the article which appeared in *Chambers's Journal* for May.[1]

Mrs. Hayden returned to America in the autumn of 1853, and the amusement of table-turning, which had already lost the attraction of novelty, ceased at about the same period to attract the attention of society and the Press. So little, indeed, was heard of it after 1853 that in July of the following year the *Scottish Review*, in the course of a notice of Dibdin's book, writes of it as "the epidemic which has recently prevailed in our country, and which has now, we trust, so nearly run its course that we may treat it as a matter of history."

[1] Chambers never lost his interest in Spiritualism, though his position as a publisher appears to have prevented him from taking a prominent part in the movement. In later years, and down to his death, in 1871, he witnessed many marvels through the mediumship of D. D. Home. He contributed, indeed, an anonymous Preface to Home's book, *Incidents in my Life*, and at the trial *Lyon v. Home* he made an affidavit in the defendant's favour.

CHAPTER II

THE INCUBATION PERIOD, 1854–1859

BUT the triumph of the Scottish Reviewer was premature. There were, indeed, few outward signs of the movement for the next five or six years. At the outset almost the only publications which dealt with the subject were the periodical instalments of Robert Owen's *New Existence of Man upon Earth.* And Owen's interest in Spiritualism was, after all, only of a secondary kind. True to the traditions of a lifetime, he valued the alleged communications with spirits mainly as providing an additional means for the advancement of mankind here on earth. The "spirits" who communicated with him, as he is himself careful to point out, consisted chiefly of persons who had been prominent during the last fifty years in seeking, by their actions or their writings, to promote the general improvement of society, and with nearly all these—Jefferson, Franklin, Shelley, Chalmers, Channing, and not least, the Duke of Kent—Owen had been personally acquainted. The questions which he submitted to these spirits dealt, not with problems of spiritual cosmology, or the occupations of the seven spheres, but with matters of immediate practical importance. When and how should he publish this or that work? To whom should copies be sent? Who should be invited to speak at the forthcoming World's Convention? Who to assist generally in the promotion of the millennium? "Are the Queen, Prince Albert, the King of the Belgians, the Emperor of the French, and the Emperor of Austria the proper persons to form a conservative party to introduce the New Dispensation?"[1]

Even at the World's Convention of May, 1855, "to inaugurate the commencement of the millennium," the subject of Spiritualism was not introduced. A band of American spirits, through the mouth of J. Murray Spear, had, indeed, sent an address to be read at the Convention.

[1] *New Existence*, Part VI. (1855) p. xvii.

The address was entrusted to a famous medium, P. B. Randolph, who presented it to Owen, together with his own credentials, on the day before the meeting. Owing to the stress of business the papers remained unread until after the Convention, and Owen, though at first disposed to regret the incident, recognised later that the introduction of such a subject in such a manner might have prejudiced the success of the cause which he held most at heart.[1]

At a similar Convention, however, held on the same day, the 14th of May, in the following year, entitled "The First Meeting of the Congress of the Reformers of the World," detailed plans for Homes of Harmony emanating from the same spiritual source appear to have been submitted to the audience. These Homes of Harmony illustrated a new order of architecture, based upon circular or curved lines, such as govern the conformation of trees, planets, and the human body itself. From the engravings given in the *Millennial Gazette* they appear to have borne some resemblance to the first rude attempts at a honeycomb made by some kinds of undeveloped bees.[2]

At no time, therefore, could Owen have been reckoned a typical Spiritualist; and his influence on the movement, whatever it may have been, was cut short by his death a year or two later.

During these six years, from 1854 to 1859, in marked contrast to the extraordinary literary activity which characterised the early American movement, there were but few publications of any kind from avowedly Spiritualist sources; and the subject, with one or two exceptions, attracted little notice in the outside Press. The few books of importance, which appeared for the most part during the years 1858 and 1859, will be noticed in the latter part of this chapter. The only paper devoted to the new movement which attained any kind of permanence was the *Spiritual Telegraph*, which was first published in Keighley in April, 1855, under the title of *The Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*, and ran until the end of 1859. The paper changed its name in 1857 to the *British Spiritual Telegraph*, and during the last few months of its existence was published in London, under the editorship, or with the assistance, of William Howitt. There were also other more short-lived periodicals, of which the most successful was *The Spiritual Herald*, published in London under the auspices of some Swedenborgian Spiritualists.

[1] *New Existence*, Part VII. pp. 74 *et seq.*

[2] See Robert Owen's *Millennial Gazette*, July, 1856.

The *Herald* lasted from February to July, 1856. The *Biological Review* and the *Spiritual Messenger* were also published in London in the winter of 1858–9, and lasted apparently each for a few months only. The first, edited by Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie, was an organ of Spiritualism, homœopathy, electro-dentistry, astrology, Mesmerism, phrenology, "and the Finer Physics generally." Its chief Spiritualist contributors were the editor and Jacob Dixon, a homœopathic doctor and Mesmerist. The *Spiritual Messenger* appears to have been the private speculation of one Carpenter, a Mesmerist who conducted meetings every Sunday at Greenwich, at which a trance medium discoursed, with a collection afterwards. The subject-matter of all these periodicals consisted largely of reports of trance discourses, generally with some name of the distinguished dead at the foot. But no small part of their pages was filled with excerpts from the *New York Spiritual Telegraph* and other American papers. And generally for the first few years the lack of native material to chronicle, as well as the lack of books written in this country, was compensated by liberal importations from America. The works of Davis, Harris, Edmonds, Tallmadge, J. Bovee Dods, Rogers, and many others were largely read and quoted, and no doubt did much to form opinion and prepare for the ultimate spread of the movement on this side.

But America sent a more substantial contribution in the persons of the various mediums who, during these first years, emulating the example of Mrs. Hayden, visited our island. The first and the most influential of these missionaries was Daniel Dunglas Hume, or Home, as he afterwards spelt the name. Home, whose acquaintance we have already made,[1] came to England in April, 1855, when he was just entering on his twenty-third year. According to his own account, he was born in Scotland, but had spent the greater part of his youth and early manhood in America, and had there practised physical mediumship for some four years prior to his coming to this country. One of his earliest public séances took place at Mrs. Hayden's house in March, 1851.[2] When he first

[1] See Book II. chap. iii. In America the name appears always to have been spelt *Hume;* and as *Hume* he was generally known to his English clients and friends during this first visit to our country. The spelling *Home* was, however, adopted by some even at this date, and later came into general use. To avoid confusion, therefore, I have thought it best uniformly to adopt this spelling, especially as the medium himself invariably employed it later in life. For further details on this change in the spelling of the name see below, Book IV. chap. iii.

[2] D. D. Home, *Incidents in my Life*, First Series, p. 9, second edition, 1864.

came to this country he stayed for a short time at Cox's Hotel, in Jermyn Street; later he went as a guest to the house of Mr. Rymer, a solicitor, at Ealing, and spent the greater part of the remainder of this year with that gentleman and his family, giving numerous séances to Mr. Rymer's friends and neighbours and to various persons of distinction who sought admittance. He claims—and I know of nothing which indicates the contrary—that neither at this nor any later period did he charge any fee or accept any stipulated remuneration for his services as a medium.

The phenomena exhibited at these séances were of the same general character as those at ordinary professional séances in America at this time. Raps would be heard on the tables, the walls, and other parts of the room, and would give communications by means of the alphabet. The table would move violently, and frequently rise in the air; hand-bells, guitars, and concertinas placed under the table would be moved about, and, in the case of the last-named instrument —always a favourite with Home—a tune would be played; handkerchiefs, watches, and other articles would be taken from the sitters and moved about the room; touches, as of hands, would be felt on the knees of the sitters, and on their hands as they rested under the table. More rarely hands would be seen above the table, this last manifestation nearly always taking place in a subdued light. I can find no record at this time of the levitation of the medium (which had already taken place on several occasions in America) nor of the fire-ordeal and other more marvellous manifestations. At this date Home's performances seemed to have differed little from those of the ordinary professional medium in America: there is no single manifestation which was not the common property of the members of the guild. Nevertheless, the majority of those who witnessed the marvels offered to them appear to have been profoundly impressed; and in many cases the impression thus produced was permanent. Benjamin Coleman, J. S. Rymer, the Croslands, J. J. Garth Wilkinson, and many others, who later became prominent in the English movement, owed their first impulse to belief to their séances with Home in 1855.

Amongst those who attended some of the early séances were Lord Brougham and Sir David Brewster. Owing to a garbled account of what took place, quoted from an American source, having appeared in an English newspaper, the latter thought it necessary to write to the *Morning Advertiser* and furnish his own version of the occurrences, a version sub-

sequently endorsed by Lord Brougham. The impression left by Brewster's own letter and by the correspondence which followed is that he was at first genuinely puzzled by some of the things which he saw, and that the opinion which he formed at the moment was perhaps more favourable than he was able, on later reflection, to maintain, or willing publicly to admit. Home left England in the autumn of 1855, and did not return until the end of 1859.[1]

In 1856 it was announced that the celebrated American medium, P. B. Randolph, had been deputed by the Royal Circle of the Spiritual Heavens to repeat his visit to this country. Early in the following year he appeared at the Charing Cross Spirit Circle and delivered a trance address, which "for power of language and poetical feeling surpassed anything of the kind that the audience had ever heard."[2] He appears regularly to have attended the meetings of the Charing Cross Circle, sometimes giving trance addresses, which professed to be inspired by Sir Humphry Davy and others; sometimes taking part in dark séances, at which lights and shadowy forms were seen.[3]

In the following year Mr. Samuel Owen, a lecturer on Spiritualism, came from the United States and lectured in various halls in London and elsewhere. Owen also conducted "spirit-power" circles, and advertised that he was "prepared to attend families with excellent rapping and tipping mediums."[4]

Again, early in 1859 the Rev. T. L. Harris announced to his congregation in New York that he had now developed into the third apostolic, or missionary, degree, and was deputed to visit England and preach there. In effect he came over in May, 1859, and was introduced to a London audience on the 23rd of that month. He remained in England for some months, lecturing and conducting services in London and various provincial centres. He had apparently outgrown his earlier extravagances, already referred to,[5] and had not yet fully formulated his later and equally extravagant doctrines. His teachings at this time set forth in language of vague grandiloquence a mystical Christianity,

[1] Some account of Home's séances in England in 1855 will be found in Book IV. chaps. iii. and iv., which deal with the subject of his mediumship in general. For a detailed account of the sitting with Brewster see below, chap. ix. of the present book.

Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph, vol. iii. p. 125.

Ibid., vol. iii. pp. 132, 148, 166, vol. iv. p. 31.

British Spiritual Telegraph, vol. ii. pp. 93, 97, 151.

See vol. i. p. 295 *seq.*

coloured by Swedenborgian and Spiritualist additions. It is not clear that he exercised any deep influence on the Spiritualist movement in this country.[1]

Apart from these American missionaries, professional mediums and lecturers on Spiritualism found hardly any representatives in England during this period. Physical mediumship in general was but little developed, and the class of professional mediums with whom we have become familiar in later times—persons who are willing to exhibit before anyone who is able to pay the prescribed fee—had hardly yet begun to be recognised. Almost the only indigenous medium of any pretensions was Mrs. Marshall, who, assisted by her niece and occasionally by her young son, gave from 1858 onwards regular séances, which appear to have been open to all comers. Mrs. Marshall's performances were, indeed, markedly inferior to those of Home and the more prominent American mediums in the same line; but such as they were they appear to have satisfied her clients. The accounts given in the newspapers of the time, though meagre and wanting in precision, serve at least to give a general idea of the type of manifestations and of the effect produced upon those who witnessed them. A man who signs himself "T. I. A.," writing apparently in January or February, 1859, gives the following description of a séance at which he had just been present:—[2]

"Having for some time past heard of the extraordinary 'Spirit manifestations' which are daily occurring at Mrs. Marshall's, I was induced last evening to pay her a visit, and I now send you an account of what I saw and heard, thinking the details may prove interesting to your subscribers. I was accompanied by my wife and my father, and there were two gentlemen besides ourselves present, together with Mrs. Marshall and her niece. After sitting at a table for a few moments, it was suggested that we should throw our pocket-handkerchiefs under the table. The medium (Miss M.) then took a piece of glass, a supply which we ourselves had brought, to ensure the certainty of no collusion; and having smeared it over with a composition of oil and whitening, she held it for a few seconds under the table, and upon removing it the words 'knot upon knot' were plainly written, though wrongly spelled. A second afterwards two of the handkerchiefs were thrown up from the floor, knotted, into the lap of a gentleman present who sat beside me, and the third was firmly tied up in a bunch under the table.

[1] See *British Spiritual Telegraph*, vol. iii. pp. 96, 104, vol. iv. p. 11; and various lectures published as separate pamphlets in London, Warrington, and elsewhere.

[2] *British Spiritual Telegraph*, vol. iii. pp. 109, 110.

I myself saw the handkerchiefs thrown up, and collusion was impossible. My father then asked if the Spirits present were good. The answer rapped out was 'yes.' He then asked, 'Are not these communications from evil spirits?' The reply to this was written on one of the glass plates, held, as mentioned above, by the medium under the table. 'Do you think the devils would fight against themselves by bringing the gospel of Christ?' The next question was, 'Do you believe in Christ?' Answer written as before. 'Yes, you sinners.' A little after this it was intimated that a spirit friend of our own was present. My father then requested if it would write on the glass the Christian name of his mother, who left this world many years since. An assent was given, and upon one glass was written *Do*, on another *ro*, and upon another *thy*, thus intimating that the name, which no one present knew except my father, was Dorothy. Space would fail me to tell you every written communication we had, as they must have numbered fifty. We had manifestations of knocking and table-moving after this; the table was several times moved horizontally, a foot above the ground, and there suspended for some seconds, with merely the hands of the mediums resting upon it. In every instance of this kind it was lowered most gently, and not allowed to drop with its own force. The knocks would come wherever the medium placed her hands, and to convince my father of the power she placed her hands upon his hat which he had put on, and the raps were distinctly heard upon it, and my father felt the vibration of each tap. Such is a brief and meagre account of our visit."

The raps, the movements of the table, and the knotted handkerchief were manifestations of frequent occurrence at Home's séances; the writing on glass is of interest as presenting the rudimentary form of that slate-writing which, later, in the hands of Slade and Eglinton, played so important a part in the history of English Spiritualism.[1] The Marshalls, naturally enough, found imitators, but they were, for the most part, on a humbler scale, and were content to perform anonymously and in semi-private circles. Thus we read in a case recorded by "J. D." (Jacob Dixon) of a table standing at an angle of forty-five degrees without affecting the position of a tumbler half full of water, which had been placed upon it;[2] again, we hear of raps, the knotting of a handkerchief, and attempted levitation at the spirit-power circle, Charing Cross;[3] of spirit lights and 'apports' of

[1] For other accounts of Mrs. Marshall's séances see *British Spiritual Telegraph*, vol. iii. pp. 27, 55, vol. iv. pp. 157–9.
[2] *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*, vol. ii. p. 75.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. iv. p. 36.

flowers at a Keighley circle.[1] In giving a list of manifestations which he had himself witnessed, Mr. J. Jones, of Peckham, a prominent London Spiritualist,[2] mentions no phenomena beyond those already set down.[3]

The mediums in all the cases cited, as in nearly all instances at this time, were anonymous, their identity being revealed to the initiated at most by initials. Probably many of these persons ultimately became professional mediums, but at this time neither they nor their clients were willing, apparently, to take the risk of wider publicity. In many cases the medium shrank even from so much exposure as was involved in attending a regular circle, such as the Charing Cross or Keighley Circles, and would consent to perform only in the congenial environment of his immediate family or household. A good instance of this kind is afforded by the history of a youthful medium detailed for us at some length in the pages of the *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*.[4] Jacob Dixon ("J. D.") was a homœopathic doctor practising in London, who had for many years studied the phenomena of ecstasy and clairvoyance, his attention having been first led to the subject through seeing a patient mesmerised by Elliotson. He had, as he tells us later, become convinced by his investigations of the possibility of communication with spirits. At the height of the excitement caused by Mrs. Hayden's visit Dixon happened to call one day on a friend named E., a professional phrenologist and healer. E. was at the moment holding a séance, the medium (and only other sitter) being a little errand boy, nine years old, employed by him. With the permission of the spirits, Dixon was invited to join the party. He received through raps communications from various friends and relatives, and was informed that his guardian spirits were Job, Enoch, Noah, and Bacon. Conviction came on the moment, and was deepened when at later sittings the raps undertook to prescribe for Dixon's patients, and also for himself. Moreover, an epidemic of cholera in the autumn of 1853 was predicted, to a day, two months before its occurrence.[5]

[1] *British Spiritual Telegraph*, vol. i. p. 26. See also *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 94; vol. iv. p. 180, etc. See also vol. iv. p. 118 for an account by Mr. S. Wilks, Hon. Secretary of the Hoxton Spiritualist Society, of the vanishing and sudden reappearance, under spirit power, of an earring belonging to his wife. But the phenomenon in this case took place in the domestic circle, with only those whom Madame Blavatsky called the 'domestic imbeciles' to witness it.

[2] Known to a later generation of Spiritualists as J. Enmore Jones.

[3] *British Spiritual Telegraph*, vol. ii. pp. 87, 88.

[4] Vols. iii. iv. (1856–7), articles by "J. D." "How I became convinced."

[5] *Ibid.*, vol. iii. p. 135.

The manifestations consisted exclusively of raps; and Dixon remarked that there was some excuse for the suspicions—suspicions which he did not himself share—of the good faith of the medium entertained by some who were admitted to the circle, since the lower part of the boy's body was "much exercised" whilst the sounds were being made. Little opportunity was offered, however, to such sceptics, since the spirits rarely permitted anyone but E. and Dixon to share their ministrations, and hardly anyone beyond these two was permitted a second visit. In the course of the few months' sittings recorded by Dixon the raps indicated from time to time that a knife, rabbits, a goat, money (for his mother), and a gun were to be presented to the medium. All these commands were punctually fulfilled by E., except that Robert Owen, who had been an occasional visitor, forestalled him in purchasing the gun. It is but fair to state that the spirits also issued commands—when the punishment for a serious offence committed by Dan was left to their decision—that the boy should be whipped; and that later they prescribed schooling for him. It should be added that E. and all his household, including the medium himself and an elder sister, were originally vegetarians, but the raps ultimately prescribed a meat diet for all.

It will be noted that E. gave implicit obedience to the commands issued through the raps, a feature which we shall meet with frequently. In the history of English Spiritualism Dan and his master had many successors.[1]

Another instance of exclusiveness is furnished by "Jane," the servant of Mrs. de Morgan. "Jane" was a young woman who came to Mrs. de Morgan in 1854. Mrs. de Morgan had in the previous year paid some visits to Mrs. Hayden, and had since been deeply interested in the question of Spiritualism. It soon proved that "Jane" was a medium, her mediumship in the first instance taking the form of rapping and table-moving. But whilst "Jane" was generally successful in the company of her mistress, her powers in this respect were extremely uncertain, and with most persons she failed altogether. Moreover, her ability to produce raps ceased after about two years and a half, and was never renewed.[2]

But, after all, the characteristic manifestations of this period were not these sporadic, and to later critics singularly unconvincing, physical phenomena. That the performances of

[1] This medium, Daniel Offord, afterwards joined the Shakers (see *Spiritual Magazine*, 1872, p. 344). [2] *From Matter to Spirit*, pp. 19–22.

Mrs. Hayden and D. D. Home had served to arouse widespread interest in the subject has been already shown. But it may be doubted whether the conviction of spiritual agency would have been produced, in any person whose judgment would be worth weighing, by the rapping of tables, spirit lights, and self-moving concertinas. At any rate, as a matter of historical fact, the effect of these physical marvels was, in nearly every instance, supplemented by manifestations of another kind, which in many cases were no doubt free from any reasonable suspicion of dishonesty. It is to the extraordinary outburst of subliminal or automatic activity—visions, trance-speaking, "inspired" writing and drawing—at this period that we must look for the real explanation of the rapid growth of Spiritualism in England during the next generation. By many professional mediums, as in the case of Home and Randolph, the two forms of manifestation were combined. Mrs. de Morgan's "Jane" subsequently developed the power of seeing visions. But for the most part seeing of visions, automatic writing and speaking, were not, as we have already had occasion to note in the case of American Spiritualists, combined with any form of physical mediumship, except the movement of tables, which of course does not necessarily involve deception. Writing mediums or speaking mediums sprang up at this time in almost every private Spiritualist circle. Owen, in his *New Existence of Man upon Earth*,[1] published many communications received by him from private inquirers during the period 1853–5. Thus Mr. Fred. Hockley, of Croydon, shortly after the publication by Owen of his confession of faith, wrote to say that he (Hockley) had studied the subject for some thirty years, through the medium latterly of a young girl and a mirror or crystal. He was now in constant communication by these means with the Crowned Angel of the Seventh Sphere; and was instructed by the "C. A."—for so he is styled throughout the correspondence—to write to Owen, and inform him that the person calling himself the Duke of Kent was an evil spirit, an impostor, and not a member of the Fourth Circle at all. Much correspondence ensued throughout the year 1854, the "C. A." being so anxious for Owen's conversion that at length he indited a letter commencing, "My dear Mr. Owen," to which Owen, as in courtesy bound, forwarded through Mr. Hockley a formal reply subscribed, "To the Crowned Angel of the Seventh Sphere."

[1] Parts vi. and vii.

In the same year, Mr. H. of Luton, a Quaker, sent to Owen an account of his circle, at which communications were commonly received in writing from Milton, Wesley, Shakespeare, and Franklin. The medium in this case was a boy between twelve and thirteen. A specimen of Miltonic prose and several fragments of Shakespearean tragedies, printed at the length of many octavo pages, reveal, it may be admitted, the workings of no intellect higher than that of the average schoolboy. But there is no reason to suspect the schoolboy of dishonesty. Here is an entire scene, stage directions and all, from the tragedy entitled *The Death of Brennus*:—

"Scene: The Seige (*sic*) of Crosuim.

Brennus: On, soldiers, on.

(After an obstinate siege of six months Crosuim is taken with an immense slaughter.)

Scene closes."

Again, the P. family, writing in January, 1855, furnish communications on the Crimean War and other topics of the time from the Duke of Wellington, Nelson, the Marquis of Anglesea, Mehemet Ali, Robert Burns, and others.[1]

There was, again, a little group of Swedenborgians, of whom Elihu Rich was the spokesman, who met regularly to receive instruction through the trance discourses of a seeress named Annie. These trance utterances began at least as early as 1854. Here is an extract from a discourse delivered in June, 1854, on the war, as reported by an anonymous correspondent in the *Spiritual Herald*:—

"Good and truth are represented by England and France, who will fight against the lust of dominion grounded in the false represented by Russia; but it appears as yet that they make but little progress. *Your* guide," said Annie, "has been to see some wise men in the spiritual world, who have told him that there are wars now in some of the other planets of our solar system. I can only remember one name, that is Saturn; the places at war there are called 'Ohiea' and 'Alfea'; their war originated in a dispute about two words, *which* should be placed on the right side and *which* on the left. Our war *apparently* had no better reason; the cause *seemed* as trivial, for it appeared in the world of spirits as two men fighting for a cross on a piece of paper.

"This war corresponds to the arrangement of the societies in the Grand Man in the large blood-vessel descending from the heart, the Grand Man being composed of all societies from different planets."

[1] *New Existence*, part vi. p. 93.

Here, again, is a characteristic extract from the seeress' description of a vision, given two years later:—

"The mountain is formed of one large ruby. There are a great many trees and flowers about it, divided into many parts. There are angels talking about the Word in some parts of the mountain; others riding upon white horses, which signifies the understanding of the Word; others washing their hands in a stream of water, which signifies purification of the external man. Some are gathering fruits—they are delights of wisdom from the Word; some gathering flowers—they are arranging truths they have received from the Lord, the flowers representing the truths.

"There is a beautiful angel coming through the clouds. The angel has brought the Word. He came in a chariot with four white horses. The chariot is pure gold. He is reading the Word:

"'Stand still, ye works of Jehovah,
"'For your Maker passeth by:
"'Jehovah will breathe upon you to bless you,
"'But keep his works clean.
"'Breathe not for instruction,
"'But consider your doings;
"'For your Maker is just, wonderful, and mighty—
"'Jehovah is his name.'"[1]

The pages of the *Herald* and the *Spiritual Telegraph* are filled with records of similar automatic utterances and writings; discourses from the spirits of John Edmundson or Alexander Hutchinson; "Pages of the Paraclete," a long dissertation on the past history of man and other matters, in the style of A. J. Davis or Linton; accounts of maps and drawings executed under spirit influence; of visions of angels holding scrolls. Nor were our English mediums less fortunate or more modest than their American contemporaries. Goldsmith, Addison, Burns, Sir Walter Scott, Stanley, and Sir Robert Peel are amongst the occasional communicators, whilst Benjamin Franklin, Shakespeare, and Shelley seem to have discoursed nightly. A Newcastle circle reported that on one night no less than five thousand one hundred and eleven spirits had attended them, of whom were twenty Kings and seven Queens of the lineage of David, King of Israel. David himself was present, and amongst the lesser lights were Homer, Cicero, Demosthenes, Luther, Cranmer, and John Knox.[2] At a later meeting Luther undertook to

[1] *Spiritual Herald*, pp. 193-4. For some further account of this seeress, whose name I have not been able to ascertain, see *Notes on Certain Forms of Spiritualism*, by "E. R." (Elihu Rich), 1858.

[2] *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*, vol. ii. p. 44.

teach the members Latin, King David promised elementary lessons in Hebrew, and Noah "gave some very interesting and curious details respecting the state of the antediluvian earth."[1] Mr. Shaw, of Bradford, reported that he had upwards of three hundred pages of unpublished spirit manuscripts;[2] and John Scott, of Belfast, gives a long list of discourses received from names great in the history of mankind.[3] Some of the communications received at this time, as a rule orally, were in "unknown tongues," the translation being furnished by the medium at the time.[4] But this particular manifestation does not seem to have been so frequent or to have attracted so much attention as in America.[5]

To the reader at the present day, familiar as he probably is with the idea of subconscious mental activity, the effect produced by trance utterances and automatic writing on the Spiritualist of forty or fifty years ago is hardly intelligible. It seems worth while, therefore, to examine more closely the process of reasoning by which conviction of spiritual agency was produced, in the typical case of a man whose attention was first drawn to the subject by witnessing and hearing of physical manifestations, and who finally yielded to the accumulated evidence of trance-speaking and "spirit"-writing.

The late Mr. Thomas Shorter, author of *Confessions of a Truth-Seeker*,[6] and some years later editor of the *Spiritual Magazine*, will serve as a case in point. Mr. Shorter was himself in many ways a good example of the best type of middle-class English Spiritualists, a type strongly resembling that exemplified in America by Judge Edmonds, Governor Tallmadge, and S. B. Brittan. In his youth he tells us he had been carried away from the strict evangelicalism of his childhood by the wave of Socialist and humanitarian sentiment which marked the middle period of the century. For a time he found, like others, sufficient satisfaction for his religious instincts in working for the good of his fellows and in contemplating the coming millennium. Later he felt the need of some, it may be, less concrete ideal, and his vague aspirations were sharpened, as he records, by an unforeseen and most painful bereavement. It was about this time that he first heard of the new Spiritualist movement. A mind so situated was little likely to be critical, and Shorter shows throughout his inquiries a simple trust in the honesty and goodwill of the mediums whom he consulted that was

[1] *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*, vol. iii. p. 25. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 80.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. iv. p. 162. [4] *Ibid.*, vol. iii. p. 8, vol. iv. p. 257.
[5] See above, Book II. chap. iv. [6] London, 1859.

hardly surpassed by Robert Owen himself. He was much impressed at the outset by the messages conveyed through the tilting of a table, and by what he heard of the performances of D. D. Home. But it was on the evidence afforded by the mental phenomena that his faith finally rested. Apart from his childlike trust in the good faith of those with whom he had to deal, Shorter was by no means well equipped for an investigation into delicate matters of evidence. In questions of physical science and of philosophy his education was probably not in advance of the middle-class standard of the time, a standard which, as Faraday had shown, fell lamentably short of what was required. Shorter thought little of Faraday; but on the other hand, though unable to agree with his conclusions, he considered Dr. Rogers, the author of the pretentious and muddle-headed *Philosophy of Mysterious Agents*, "by far the ablest" opponent of Spiritualism.[1] Naturally, Shorter was unable to see the true significance of the automatic movements of the table, of trance-speaking, and involuntary writing. He was satisfied that all these actions took place frequently without the conscious participation of the so-called medium. He saw, or believed, that the intelligence shown in much of the trance-speaking was above any possessed by the medium, as he knew her in her waking hours. He saw, moreover, that the intelligence shown was not the result merely of an effort of memory, but that processes of reasoning and judgment went on without apparently the knowledge of the person who was used as a mouthpiece. The theory of unconscious cerebration, as he had apprehended it, was purely mechanical. He illustrates it by supposing an automatic chess-player. That mental acts could take place without being represented in the ordinary working consciousness of the actor was to him incredible. To admit the possibility would be, he contends, to sap the foundations of theology, to violate common sense, and to contradict the whole experience of mankind. If, then, intelligence was displayed which was not that of the person speaking; if, further, the intelligence displayed qualities higher than those of the medium; if occasionally it betrayed knowledge or showed skill not possessed by the medium; if, lastly, the intelligence persistently and passionately claimed to represent the spirit of a dead man—was it not reasonable, he would ask, to accept this intelligence at its own valuation?

Such were the ideas, more or less crudely expressed, ac-

[1] Some account of Rogers' book is given above, vol. i. p. 288.

cording to the understanding and education of the witness, which led to the acceptance of various automatic utterances as genuine revelations from the spirit world. Even so able a man as Dr. Garth Wilkinson, a homœopathic physician, well known for his *Life of Swedenborg*, was more or less under the influence of the same beliefs. He had himself published in 1857 an octavo volume of "impressional" poetry of some merit,[1] and in the same year, in a pamphlet proposing to treat lunacy on the homœopathic principle by mild doses of Spiritualism, he indicates his views of the involuntary writing and drawing. Of these automatic manifestations he speaks as "spirit-writing," "spirit-outflow," and defends this terminology on the ground that, whether proceeding from the subject's own deeper nature or from external sources, the guiding power was alike spiritual.[2]

Another instance is Mrs. de Morgan, wife of the well-known Professor of Mathematics already referred to. Her book, *From Matter to Spirit*, though not published until 1863, deals for the most part with experiences of this period from 1853, when she first went to Mrs. Hayden's, onwards. She soon discovered, as already mentioned, a medium in her own household in the person of a servant, "Jane." But, for Mrs. de Morgan also, the interest excited by rapping and movements of tables was quickly swallowed up in the marvels of automatic writing and speaking and the seeing of visions. Members of her own family and her friends were, as a rule, the mediums for these latter manifestations. Apart from the absolute sincerity and earnestness of purpose which mark the book, it cannot be said that the records are impressive. The proof that the drawings and writings were not merely random products of subterranean mental activities, and the visions but waking dreams of the medium, is made to depend upon tests which at the best must seem wholly inadequate. Sometimes similar drawings would be produced simultaneously by different mediums; sometimes two seers would see independently similar visions; sometimes the vision of one would correspond with the writing given through the hand of another; sometimes a seer would recognise in a photograph the face of some deceased person who had appeared to her in trance.[3] Even if incidents such as these had been of the nature of experiments, instead of, as a rule, mere observations by the way, and if

[1] *Improvisations from the Spirit*, by J. J. G. W. London, 1857.
[2] *The Homœopathic Principle applied to Insanity*, by J. J. Garth Wilkinson, M.D. London, 1857.
[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 36, 67, 68, 71, 81, etc.

they had been recorded with the utmost precision of time and circumstance, they could still hardly be held to justify the momentous conclusions drawn from them.

Mrs. de Morgan's book deals chiefly with symbolism and correspondences, and furnishes an adaptation of Swedenborg's philosophy to modern Spiritualism. But this aspect of the subject bulks still more largely in one or two other books of the time. Mrs. Newton Crosland—known as an authoress under the name of Camilla Toulmin—published in 1857 an account of her experiences, *Light in the Valley*. Both she and her husband had attended some of Home's circles, and had witnessed the usual phenomena. But Mrs. Crosland appears to have been little affected by the physical manifestations, and dismisses them in a few pages. It is on the various phases of automatic activity which displayed themselves in herself and in her friends that her interest is centred. Communications were received sometimes by writing, sometimes by drawing, sometimes by visions, direct or through the medium of a crystal. Of the writing, she tells us that she had enough to fill a substantial volume. Some of the writing was in the mother tongue. But much of it was written in one or other spirit language. Mrs. Crosland's circle included many writing mediums of both sexes, to whom were given by the spirits symbolic names, such as "The Rose," "Comfort," "Confidence," "Expansion." The last-named, an author of repute and a graduate of Oxford, produced a drawing of a wheel, and a description of its symbolism in one of the spirit languages, of which a facsimile is given in the book. After the writing was completed, a translation was furnished. It frequently happened, Mrs. Crosland tells us, that those who wrote the spirit language were unable to translate it, but that a translation would be furnished by another hand. No attempt seems to have been made to analyse the seemingly random curves and angles of which the so-called "spirit language" is composed, or to show that it had really any consistency or significance. Among things terrestrial, if we may judge from the specimens reproduced in the book, this spirit language was most like to a sphygmograph tracing. The following extract from a lengthy account given by the medium "Comfort" of her spiritual development suggests that its "interpretation" was at least sometimes ambiguous:—

"The first drawings were very rude indeed, like the uncertain tottering lines of a child, and also singularly resembling the designs of the very early Italian painters—heads of Christ, angels, and

curious female figures seated within spheres and hearts; and always these drawings were accompanied with strange ornaments of spiral and shell forms, with dots and scroll-like ciphers, which I thought odd at the time, but only months afterwards, when accidentally referring to them, discovered to be the first undeveloped attempts at writing one of the 'spirit languages.'"[1]

But more remarkable even than the writings were the drawings to which the last extract refers. These drawings were invariably symbolic; and the symbolism, of a very intricate character, was commonly interpreted at the time by the communicating intelligence. Here, for instance, is the interpretation, given through the hand of "Rose," of one of the simplest of these drawings. The drawing itself, it should be explained, had been produced without conscious volition by the hand of a gentleman whose spirit name was "Confidence." It consisted mainly of a row of seven circles, with crosses inscribed, the picture being filled in with a crescent moon, a sun, a heart, wings, crescents, sphygmograph tracings, etc.

"*The Seven Days of Creation.* The seven spheres, each with a cross, represent the seven days of creation, each day with its crucifixion; each successively created Being a suffering Being.

"The largest cross, at the right hand, as looked at from the world, is the first crucifixion of God Himself in His outer individual human manifestation.

"The left cross, which is the later, and at the present time the least developed, is the mental manifestation, evolving from which is the woman's word, the outer, the inner, and the innermost. Then the cross disappears entirely, because there will then be progression without a cross. Now, in the present age, it is a progression in, and through, and with a cross.

"The whole creation is encompassed by an undeveloped triangle. The universal woman, which is represented by the large half-moon, is encompassed by the undeveloped triangle.

"The wings represent the influence of mind. We at the present time are in the sixth day, as typified by the wings attached to the sixth sphere.

"The sun with a face in it is a symbol of the whole nature of the Divine Powers uniting the undeveloped triangle to the more perfected triune of the heart. The winged heart has a cross in its upper and in its lower section, showing that the lowest as well as the highest organization must be polarized to God by crucifixion or suffering. The spheres in each section of the heart prove that the lowest as well as the highest natures must become spherical through suffering."[2]

[1] Pages 127, 128. [2] Pages 111, 112.

Many of these drawings were extraordinarily complex, and crowded with minute detail; moreover, the design would frequently be changed whilst the work proceeded, one feature being rubbed out and another substituted. Hence it followed that the mere external interpretation of the completed drawing became a matter of some difficulty, and left a certain freedom for individual choice. Thus, of one detail in a complicated picture we have the spirit interpretation in this wise: "To the externally minded it is a balloon, but to the internally minded it is a pair of lutes proceeding from a sphere of light and united by the martyr's palm."[1]

Besides these drawings there were many visions of spiritual things. There were also coloured auras to be seen round living persons, diverse according to their diverse characters: the Duke of Wellington was enveloped in an aura of sapphire blue. Moreover, each person had a spiritual emblem, a kind of crest, which he bore about with him visibly to the spiritual eye. Some of these spirit emblems — arrangements of feathers, circles, arrow-heads, stars, triangles, wings, etc.— are figured in the book; and the authoress suggests that in these psychic accompaniments of our personality we have the foundation of all orders and regalia, and of the science of earthly heraldry.

The book, in short, is imbued with the same kind of mystical Christianity which we have already seen in Mrs. de Morgan's work, but here its extravagances are less restrained, and a personal note is apparent in the insistence throughout the symbolic teachings on the lofty part assigned to woman in the New Moral Order.

From W. M. Wilkinson, brother of the Dr. Garth Wilkinson already mentioned, who, under the signature of "Verax," had given his testimony to Home in the *Morning Advertiser*, we have more records of spirit-writing and of symbolic drawings.[2] In August, 1856, Wilkinson had lost a son, a boy of eleven. A few weeks later his brother, about a year older, began to write, and afterwards to draw, automatically. Soon afterwards Mrs. Wilkinson also drew with great freedom and rapidity. The drawings sometimes represented buildings or scenes, but more commonly flowers. These flowers were, however, as a rule, of no known order. Wilkinson writes of one of them, "It is a beautiful and complex shape, and looks as if it might well have an existence in nature, and be no small addition to the floral world."

[1] Page 163.

[2] *Spirit Drawings: a Personal Narrative*, by W. M. Wilkinson. London, 1858.

The manifestations did not stop here. In a few weeks Wilkinson's hand was impelled to write the "interpretation" of drawings produced by his wife, messages from their dead son, and spiritual discourses. The contagion soon spread. Wilkinson mentions that of seventeen persons of his acquaintance who sat down to write automatically, fifteen were successful almost immediately. Again, in January, 1858, Mr. and Mrs. W. Howitt, who had already through Mrs. de Morgan, the Croslands, and others, witnessed something of the spirit manifestations, paid a visit to the Wilkinsons' house at Hampstead and inspected the drawings produced by Mrs. Wilkinson, all of which had been carefully preserved. A few days later William Howitt's hand began to move, and traced with a pencil rude figures on the paper. Thereafter he too began to write, and for some months received nightly long communications from the spirit world. Both he and Mrs. Howitt also produced symbolic drawings, flowery, architectural, geometric, or resembling oriental arabesques. Together with these drawings were written the spiritual interpretations of them.[1]

The class of persons who claimed by spiritual appointment to be evangelists, prophets, and reformers, of whom T. L. Harris, James Scott, and J. Murray Spear are prominent American examples, was not without its representatives at this time, though here they attracted less attention, and appear to have had few disciples. Of the Cheltenham Shiloh we have spoken in the preceding chapter. Another visionary of the same type, who was indeed at one time in correspondence with Julius Hartegilligan—or "Ecce Homo," as he then styled himself—was Frank Starr. Starr at the time of his first experience was a commercial traveller in Norwich, who had apparently dazed himself with long contemplation of the errors of the Roman Church, the near coming of the millennium, and the wretched state of the poor. One of his first publications was a pamphlet, *On the distressed condition of the Operatives of Norwich*.[2] In June, 1850, he had a vision; he entered a public-house near Greenwich on the first Sunday in the month in order to get some beer and bread and cheese. There he conversed for many hours on the employment of the poor and other matters with twelve men, whom he presently discovered to be angels. At the end of

[1] *Pioneers of the Spiritual Reformation*, by Mrs. Howitt-Watts, pp. 261–70. London, 1883.

[2] Referred to in the *British Spiritual Telegraph*, vol. iv. p. 172. I have not seen the original.

the interview their leader said, "Come, let us anoint him, and set him forth upon his high mission," and therewith placed his hands upon Starr's head . . . On his return to Norwich Starr's friends had him placed in an asylum where, according to his own account, he deliberately, by instruction of the spirits, feigned madness. He was further comforted during his confinement by visions, which, to his great astonishment, the doctors and his keeper were unable to share. On his release and recovery he published an account of his visions and his sojourn in the asylum, and later gave a series of lectures on his experiences.[1] The books are singularly rambling and incoherent, and there can, I imagine, be little doubt that they record, with some fidelity, the dreams of a mind temporarily unbalanced. His works are reviewed in the Spiritualist papers of the time, but he seems to have found no followers.[2]

A more coherent and more influential visionary was J. G. H. Brown, of Nottingham. Brown appears to have been a professional healer; at any rate, he advertised that he was enabled by spiritual power to cure all curable diseases, and was willing to prescribe by letter without a personal interview and without a fee. He was also in person, or by proxy, a seer of visions, and his published spiritual communications are numerous, including *Revelations on the Late War; Important Revelations from the Spirit of Emmanuel Swedenborg and Joseph Smith;*[3] and *A Message from the World of Spirits;* a series of pamphlets issued at monthly intervals and published in book form in 1857. From the last-named work we learn that Brown received many communications from angels and archangels, Gabriel, Michael, Uriel; also from the spirits of the Duke of Wellington, H.R.H. the Duke of Kent, Sir John Franklin, Oliver Cromwell, William Palmer (the Rugeley murderer), and many others. The book contains many revelations concerning the planets and their inhabitants, and is enriched with a map of the spirit spheres, showing the realms of eternal glory.

[1] *A Midsummer Morning's Dream* and *The Vision of Midsummer Morning's Dream.* Norwich, 1854. *Lectures on Twenty Years of a Traveller's Life.* London, 1867 (?).

[2] See *Spiritual Herald*, pp. 137–41. *British Spiritual Telegraph*, vol. iv. pp. 75, 93, 171.

[3] The full title continues: "*Shewing the sacred and Holy Doctrine as set forth by Swedenborg, whose errors are proved unimportant; the Doctrine of Joseph Smith being proved hypocritical and delusive, resulting through worldly ambition; as described in revelations from the spirits of both men, which are sanctioned and confirmed by the Great Angel Gabriel,*" by J. G. H. Brown, medium. London. No date. (?) 1856.

Further, we learn that in September, 1854, Brown and five friends then present, with seven others to be added to them, were chosen to establish the true principles and creed of the Universal Church of Christ. The medium, it need hardly be said, was the chief of these thirteen persons; in a later chapter he speaks of "this extraordinary book, written by express command of the Supreme Ruler of all things made through his Holy Angels to me, and addressed to the whole human race."[1]

In 1857 Brown founded a paper, *The Community's Journal and Standard of Truth*, devoted to the new evangel. The opening number contains an address to the members forming the community, with the exordium :—

"We, the Spiritual Circle established at Nottingham, having received instructions for the foundation of the Great Universal Organization, by enrolling Members who will pledge themselves to resist all worldly delusions, and to unite their energies solely for the welfare of their fellow-creatures, and the glory of God."

The precise aims of this new organisation are nowhere clearly set forth; but we gather that it was designed to restore the rights of the down-trodden working classes, to remove all tyranny and oppression, to secure justice, equality, and freedom, to amend the laws of marriage and rent, and generally to prepare the way for the millennium, by calling upon England, "tottering beneath the groans of her oppressed people," and on the tyrants and the unrighteous generally, to repent, and take heed because of the calamities which should fall upon the earth before the Second Coming and the Millennial Era. The Socialist ideas thus presented are not unlike Owen's, but the whole is embittered by a strong infusion of Hebraic prophecy, and no doubt by the jaundiced nature of the seer himself. Characteristically, Brown says that though Owen's work is moral and instructive, his spiritual teachings, since they are not at one with those of the Nottingham seer, cannot be depended on.[2] Having proved them for five years, Brown can vouch that his own spirits are celestial, and all others aerial merely, or worse.[3]

From this brief sketch it will have become apparent that English Spiritualism prior to 1860 differed widely in many respects not only from contemporary Spiritualism in

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 310. [2] *A Message*, etc., p. 138.
[3] *Community's Journal*, p. 211.

America, but from the later movement in this country. As compared with the movement in America the differences are chiefly of degree. There is a general lack of life and colour on the English side; all phases of the American propaganda are represented, but as in a pale reflection. And there is a marked shrinking from publicity. British Spiritualists had not, as yet, the courage of their opinions. As already shown, books were few, periodicals still fewer, and for the most part short-lived; and their contents, when not quoted from American sources, are very generally anonymous. A like anonymity for the most part protected the native mediums.

Partly, no doubt, the slow progress of the English propaganda is to be attributed to accidental causes. As we have already seen, during the period of the Revolution and for some years afterwards the study of Animal Magnetism was almost at a standstill in France. So the preoccupation of the British public, during a great part of the period now under consideration, with its external concerns, first the Crimean War, and later the Indian Mutiny, may no doubt be partly responsible for a like result in this country.

But apart from this temporary preoccupation and from any differences of national temperament, the conditions of an old and long-settled country, with its authoritative standards of taste and belief, and its comparatively homogeneous public opinion, finding expression through a powerful Press, would in any case have operated to prevent the new belief spreading with the epidemic rapidity which we have witnessed in the United States. Certainly no one would at this time have ventured to estimate the number of British Spiritualists in millions. This view of the case is strengthened if we consider that it was in Yorkshire—a county which had previously given a welcome to the Society of Friends, to the Church of the New Jerusalem, and to various forms of Dissent—that Spiritualism first established itself;[1] and that generally the provinces seem to have shown themselves more receptive than the Metropolis. In London, for the greater part of the period under review, there was no Spiritualist paper and no stable

[1] Keighley, the chief provincial centre of English Spiritualism, had apparently been for some years notable for the activities of a little band of Secularists, and it was among these Secularists, of whom D. W. Weatherhead, the founder of the *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*, was the leader, that Spiritualism found its first converts (see *Westminster Review*, January, 1862, and *Spiritual Magazine*, 1875, p. 475.)

organisation. We hear, indeed, so early as January, 1857, of the Charing Cross Spirit-Power Circle, of which John Jones, of Peckham, was the chronicler.[1] In July of the same year this seems to have given place to the London Spiritualistic Union, with W. Turley, a lecturer and professional Spiritualist agent, as secretary.[2] Mr. Jones, however, formally separated himself from this body, and formed a "Circle of Spheral Harmony" on his own account.[3] In July, 1858, the London Spiritualistic Union gave place to the London Spiritualist Union, with Dr. Dixon as secretary.[4] But it was not until February, 1859, that a fairly representative committee was formed, including Ashburner, Dixon, Jones, Turley, and Shorter, with William M. Wilkinson as secretary.[5] A public library of Spiritualist works was also formed about the same time at Dixon's house.[6]

Again, for like reasons, there was little tendency in this country to make spirit revelations the foundation of a new creed. Not only amongst the little band of Swedenborgians and Christian mystics whose writings we have just been considering, but throughout the country, Spiritualism was regarded, with few exceptions, as supplementing rather than as supplanting the older revelation. Even those who, like Shorter, claimed to have been converted from unbelief by this means, appear as a rule to have been converted to Christianity.

As compared with later developments in this country, the salient characteristic is the attitude of the believer to the phenomena in general, and especially to the physical phenomena—an attitude of naïve and unquestioning acceptance. There were no tests; and consequently no "exposures." Accounts of séances with Home or Mrs. Marshall show, coupled with complete ignorance of the possibilities and methods of fraud, an almost ludicrous confidence in the medium. We have already had occasion to record Dixon's conviction, notwithstanding suspicious appearances, of the integrity of the errand-boy Dan; and the cheerful obedience yielded by Dan's master to the spirits' behests. But in fact the writers of the period lay little stress upon the physical phenomena. They were accepted as genuine, but comparatively unimportant; and few thought it worth while to give any detailed account of them. Mrs. Crosland, as

[1] *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*, vol. iii. pp. 126, 131, vol. iv. p. 13, etc.
[2] *British Spiritual Telegraph*, vol. i. p. 46.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. i. pp. 85, 112.
[4] *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 165.
[5] *Ibid.*, vol. iii. pp. 97, 98.
[6] *Ibid.*, vol. iii. p. 190.

already mentioned, hurries over her experiences with Home to get to the psychological phenomena. Shorter mentions "the simple fact that heavy bodies frequently moved without touch or contact"; and, again, gives a list of the marvels which he had seen, including tables rising from the floor, cantering round the room, and tilting at an angle of forty-five degrees with all the objects on them remaining unmoved. But he gives not a single case in detail.[1] And Mrs. de Morgan thinks "that instances of tables rising from the floor to the height of three or four feet are so well attested" that it is hardly necessary for her to refer to them.[2]

Attention was thus concentrated by preference, not on the actual rappings, or the movements of tables and chairs, but on the content of the messages delivered by these and other means. And the same perfect confidence was shown throughout. In the case of the automatic writers, drawing mediums, and seers, whose performances are chronicled by Wilkinson, Mrs. Crosland, and others, there is no reason to suppose that this confidence—so far as the personal character of the medium is concerned—was as a rule misplaced. Automatism of the kind is now, no doubt, sufficiently recognised as a genuine manifestation. But with professional mediums, or with persons whose mediumship brought them any advantage in coin or kind, a less childlike trustfulness might have been good for the souls of both parties. When the raps referred to "butiful riting," where an educated mortal would have spoken of *beautiful writing*, the explanation offered, that the spirits were forced to accommodate themselves to the illiterate organism through which they worked, gives less satisfaction to the modern reader than it apparently gave to the Spiritualist of the fifties.[3] Or again, when Jacob Dixon writes: "Matilda, it has been given me to understand, is the name of my Mother in the Spirit World," a less robust faith suspects that the medium had employed this artifice to disguise a bad shot at the proper name.[4] A like indulgence was accorded even to the celestial interlocutors. Not all the spirits, obviously, who claimed to be Shelley, Bacon, or Luther could have substantiated their claim. But the early Spiritualist would not therefore have felt justified in suspecting their good faith.

[1] *Confessions of a Truthseeker*, pp. 62, 91, etc.
[2] *From Matter to Spirit*, p. 94.
[3] See *e.g. From Matter to Spirit*, p. 23.
[4] *British Spiritual Telegraph*, vol. iii. p. 279.

These names, no doubt, might be considered "generic terms for some species of intellectual influence."[1]

Such was the faith of the early English Spiritualists. In the next two decades, it need hardly be said, this faith was more than once rudely shaken.

[1] *From Matter to Spirit*, p. 289.

CHAPTER III

THE AMERICAN INVASION, 1860–1870

IN 1860 the movement enters upon a new phase. The next twenty years constitute the classic period of English Spiritualism. From this date onwards the movement is continuously represented in London, as well as in the provinces, by one or more periodicals of good standing and conducted with some literary ability. The miscellaneous publications devoted to the subject rapidly increase, and for the most part the veil of anonymity is dropped. More and more attention is given to Spiritualism by the outside Press; and it even figures in caricature and pantomime as a subject of popular interest. The number of those who are not ashamed to confess their interest—a number now including many men and women of distinction in various departments—is continually growing. In a word, the movement, emerging from the semi-private phase which we have considered in the last chapter, now receives a late but wide and ever-widening publicity.

This change is coincident with, and is no doubt largely consequent on, the greater activity of professional, and especially of physical, mediumship. Mrs. Marshall throughout this period was giving séances, and her originally scanty repertory was enriched, especially towards the end of the decade now under review, with many novel and, it would seem, highly attractive feats. Home had returned to England with undiminished powers in the winter of 1859; and a long succession of American mediums, of whom Squire, Redman, Foster, Colchester, Conklin, and the Davenport Brothers were the most conspicuous, visited our shores during the next ten years.

In the summer of 1860 there appeared almost simultaneously in two leading periodicals articles on the spirit manifestations. The writer of "Modern Magic," in *All the*

Year Round,[1] then conducted by Charles Dickens, had attended a séance at Mrs. Marshall's rooms in Red Lion Street. The phenomena which he witnessed—movements of the table, raps, sounding of a guitar and a bell under the table or in the dark—were all, he is convinced, due to trickery, the only "mediums" in the case being Mrs. Marshall's fingers and toes. The whole performance was a "dull and barefaced imposition," and he hardly knows whether to wonder most at "the unblushing impudence of the actors or the marvellous credulity of the spectators." Finally, he enters an indignant protest against the cruelty and wickedness of those who gain a sordid living by preying on the affection and reverence paid to the dead.

A writer in the *Cornhill Magazine*,[2] afterwards acknowledged to be Robert Bell, the well-known dramatist and critic, under the title "Stranger than Fiction," has a different story to tell. He also had visited the Marshalls and other mediums, but had seen things which he was satisfied were "beyond the pale of material experiences." After recounting some of these, he ends with a detailed description of a sitting with Home. The company sat round a large table, placed near the window—the part next the window being left vacant. Paper, pencils, an accordion, and a few flowers were placed on the table. All the lights were extinguished by the command of the spirits, and the room was illumined only by the occasional flicker of a dying fire and the faint grey light coming through the window. At this stage, the writer says,

"we could see, but scarcely distinguish, our hands upon the table. A festoon of dull, gleaming forms round the circle represented what we knew to be our hands. An occasional ray from the window now and then revealed the hazy surface of the white sheets [*sc.* of paper] and the misty bulk of the accordion."

But even this gloom was not sufficiently profound for the requirements of the spirits, for presently the window-blind was drawn down by an invisible hand, "and the room was thrown into deeper darkness than before." Then and then only the manifestations began: hands were felt under the table, touching the knees and pulling the clothes of the sitters; a handbell was rung by the invisible agency;

[1] July 28th, 1860.

[2] August, 1860. The *Cornhill* was then edited by Thackeray, who vouches for the good faith of his contributor.

"While this was going forward the white sheets were seen moving, and gradually disappeared over the edge of the table. Long afterwards we heard them creasing and crumpling on the floor, and saw them returned again to the table; but there was no writing upon them. In the same way the flowers which lay near the edge were removed. The semblance of what seemed a hand, with white, long, and delicate fingers, rose up slowly in the darkness, and bending over a flower, suddenly vanished with it. This occurred two or three times; and although each appearance was not equally palpable to every person, there was no person who did not see some of them. The flowers were distributed in the manner in which they had been removed; a hand, of which the lambent gleam was visible, slowly ascending from beneath the cover and placing the flower in the hand for which it was intended. In the flower-stands in the adjoining window we could hear geranium blossoms snapped off, which were afterwards thrown to different persons.

"Still more extraordinary was that which followed, or rather which took place while we were watching this transfer of the flowers. Those who had keen eyes, and who were in the best position for catching the light upon the instrument, declared that they saw the accordion in motion. I could not. It was as black as pitch to me. But concentrating my attention on the spot where I supposed it to be, I soon perceived a dark mass rise awkwardly above the edge of the table, and then go down, the instrument emitting a single sound produced by its being struck against the table as it went over. It descended to the floor in silence; and a quarter of an hour afterwards, when we were engaged in observing some fresh phenomena, we heard the accordion beginning to play where it lay on the ground."

The writer then expatiates on the "divine tenderness" of the wondrous music produced by the accordion. The climax of the sitting was as follows:—

"Mr. Home was seated next the window. Through the semi-darkness his head was dimly visible against the curtains, and his hands might be seen in a faint white heap before him. Presently he said, in a quiet voice, 'My chair is moving—I am off the ground—don't notice me—talk of something else,' or words to that effect. It was very difficult to restrain the curiosity, not unmixed with a more serious feeling, which these few words awakened; but we talked, incoherently enough, upon some indifferent topic. I was sitting nearly opposite Mr. Home, and I saw his hands disappear from the table, and his head vanish into the deep shadow beyond. In a moment or two more he spoke again. This time his voice was in the air above our heads. He had risen from his chair to a height of four or five feet from the ground. As he ascended higher he described his position, which at first was perpendicular, and after-

wards became horizontal. He said he felt as if he had been turned in the gentlest manner, as a child is turned in the arms of a nurse. In a moment or two more, he told us that he was going to pass across the window, against the grey, silvery light of which he would be visible. We watched in profound stillness, and saw his figure pass from one side of the window to the other, feet foremost, lying horizontally in the air. He spoke to us as he passed, and told us that he would turn the reverse way, and recross the window; which he did. His own tranquil confidence in the safety of what seemed from below a situation of the most novel peril gave confidence to everybody else; but, with the strongest nerves, it was impossible not to be conscious of a certain sensation of fear or awe. He hovered round the circle for several minutes, and passed, this time perpendicularly, over our heads. I heard his voice behind me in the air, and felt something lightly brush my chair. It was his foot, which he gave me leave to touch. Turning to the spot where it was on the top of the chair, I placed my hand gently upon it, when he uttered a cry of pain, and the foot was withdrawn quickly, with a palpable shudder. It was evidently not resting on the chair, but floating; and it sprang from the touch as a bird would. He now passed over to the farthest extremity of the room, and we could judge by his voice of the altitude and distance he had attained. He had reached the ceiling, upon which he made a slight mark, and soon afterwards descended and resumed his place at the table. An incident which occurred during this aerial passage, and imparted a strange solemnity to it, was that the accordion, which we supposed to be on the ground under the window close to us, played a strain of wild pathos in the air from the most distant corner of the room."[1]

It may be added that Dr. Gully, a well-known physician of Malvern, who had also been present at this séance, wrote in October of the same year to the *Morning Star*, corroborating and supplementing the account given by the writer in the *Cornhill Magazine*.[2]

A remarkable testimony to Home's ability, whether as medium or simply as conjurer, is the position which he succeeded in maintaining in society at this time, and indeed throughout his later life, and the respectful treatment accorded to him by many leading organs of the Press. No money was ever taken by him as the price of a sitting; and he seems to have had the *entrée* to some of the most aristocratic circles in Europe. He was welcomed in the houses of our own and of foreign nobility, was a frequent guest at the

[1] A criticism of this and other accounts of Home's mediumship will be found below, Book IV. chaps. iii. and iv.

[2] Dr. Gully's letter is quoted in full in the *Spiritual Magazine*, 1861, p. 63.

Tuileries, and had been received by the King of Prussia and the Czar. Some three years after this date, when he published the first volume of *Incidents of My Life*, the *Times* accorded him a review three columns in length, giving copious extracts from the book, and inviting in courteous terms the author's explanation of some suspicious circumstances connected with his career.[1] Home, a few days later, in vindicating his character refers to the generous treatment accorded to him.[2] So strong, indeed, was his position that he was able to compel an ample apology from a gentleman who had publicly expressed doubts of the genuineness of his mediumistic performances,[3] and to publish a violent and spiteful attack upon Browning on the occasion of the publication of *Sludge*.[4] His expulsion from Rome in 1864 on the charge of sorcery gave to Home for the time an international importance.

Another prominent medium in the year 1861 was J. R. M. Squire, one of the editors of the *Banner of Light*, an American Spiritualist paper which has been described "as in no way surpassing the *Saturday Review*."[5] Squire was apparently introduced to London society under Home's auspices, and later in the year was presented at Court by the American minister. Like Home, he seems to have given his sittings without payment. His performance included the usual rapping, movements of tables, and direct writing; but his specialty is described as follows by one of his most distinguished converts, the late Dr. Lockhart Robertson:—

"*Lifting Weight and breaking a large Table.*—A heavy circular table, made of birch and strongly constructed, was lifted a somersault in the air and thrown on the bed, the left hand only of Mr. Squire being placed on the surface, his other hand held, and his legs tied to the chair on which he sat. The table was afterwards twice lifted on to the head of the writer and of Mr. Squire. Only a strong force applied at the further side of the circular top could have produced this result. This force Mr. Squire, as is evident from his position (standing close to the writer at one point of the circle with his hands tied), could not have exerted. The efforts of the writer to prevent this lifting of the table had no influence on the strange unseen force applied to lift the table thus against his wish and force."

[1] *Times*, 9th April, 1863. [2] *Ibid.*, 16th April, 1863.
[3] Captain Noble, in the *Sussex Advertiser* of March 23rd, 1864. The letter of apology is reprinted in the *Spiritual Magazine*, 1864, p. 219.
[4] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1864, p. 315.
[5] By Dr. Lockhart Robertson, in the *Spiritual Magazine*, 1860, p. 343.

During the performance, it should be added, the circle, which consisted on this occasion of Dr. Lockhart Robertson and two friends, Mr. Critchett and W. M. Wilkinson, were in the dark, a screen being placed before the fire.[1] If Squire had the free use of his limbs, or of some of them, there is nothing to forbid the supposition that he performed the feat by muscular force alone; indeed, it was successfully imitated under those conditions, as Howitt himself describes, by an eminent English surgeon.[2] As the feat was always performed in darkness, under conditions dictated by the medium himself, I see no reason to doubt that Squire was able to use as many of his arms and legs as he required.[3]

In the course of the next three or four years, from 1860 to 1864, several American exponents of a new form of mediumship—Bly, Redman, Conklin, Colchester, and Foster—visited our island. The first-named, indeed, seems to have attempted to double the part of "medium" and exposer of Spiritualism; at any rate, he owned to performing his marvels by trickery.[4] Neither Redman nor Conklin appears to have attained great fame in this country. Finally, Colchester and Foster were actually detected in trickery by Spiritualists.[5] Moreover, the first-named was some years later compelled by the verdict of an American jury to take out a licence as a juggler;[6] and Foster's moral character was regarded as hopelessly tainted.[7] Nevertheless, as the very persons who had suspected or detected trickery were convinced that both Colchester and Foster exhibited at times genuine spirit manifestations, and as the performances of the latter, especially, are constantly quoted in later Spiritualist works as remarkable instances of mediumship, it seems worth while to consider them in detail. And for another reason these records of Foster's performances call for some consideration. They were regarded at the time, and are still regarded by many, perhaps by most, Spiritualists as at all events proofs of clairvoyance. In view

[1] *Report of the Dialectical Society*, pp. 249–50. The account appeared originally in the *Spiritual Magazine*, April, 1860, a few weeks after the occurrence.

[2] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1863, p. 173.

[3] There is nothing in the account given to forbid the supposition that Squire may have supplemented his muscular powers by mechanical means, *e.g.* by a rod concealed in his sleeve, or by a hook or other mechanical support attached to his person. See Dr. Hodgson's account (*Journal S. P. R.*, vol. vii. pp. 49, 50) of a similar apparatus.

[4] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1861, p. 92.

[5] *Ibid.*, 1862, pp. 45, 153, 546.

[6] Quoted from American papers in *Spiritual Magazine*, 1865, p. 464.

[7] In *Spiritual Magazine*, 1863, p. 147, the editor writes that he has received from Judge Edmonds such "sickening details of his criminality in another direction that . . . we should no longer soil our pages with his mediumship."

of the later manifestations through Mrs. Piper, which have so far resisted all attempts at hostile analysis, it is worth while to show what was the utmost that deliberate fraud could achieve in the early sixties.

Attention was publicly called to Foster's mediumship in the spring of 1862 by an article in the *Times*, written in a spirit of good-humoured tolerance which would much surprise readers of that austere journal at the present time. The *Times*' special correspondent appears by no means sure that what he saw was all to be explained by conjuring, and at any rate was satisfied, if it were, that he had his guinea's worth.[1] Even the leader-writer admits that some of the feats seem "startling and inexplicable."[2] On the reports furnished by most contemporary writers, Foster's performances, like those of mediums and of conjurers generally, may well have seemed inexplicable. Here, for instance, is a fairly full account, not indeed of what actually took place, but of what, at a successful séance, the sitter was induced to think had taken place. Mr. H. Spicer called upon Foster at his lodgings. After some conversation,

"Mr. Foster then said he was about to leave the room, and desired me, when left alone, to tear off some ten or twelve slips of paper, write upon each of them the name of some deceased friend, roll each slip up so tightly as to be a mere shapeless lump of paper; then roll up as many more as I pleased, in the same manner, but *blank*, and mix the whole together in a heap on the table. Having given these instructions, he left the room, closing the door, and went upstairs. . . . I then wrote down the names of six or seven deceased friends or acquaintances, purposely including one or two with whom the lapse of years had made my thoughts of late but little familiar; rolled up the strips with at least thirty others (blank) and flung the whole in a confused heap on the table, so as to be completely indistinguishable, even to myself. Mr. F., presently returning, handed me the pencil and alphabet, and, after a little 'spirit' jargon, the written slips were selected from the rest, and the names they bore spelled out [*i.e.* by the raps] with unfailing precision. . . . In reality I myself was not aware of the name contained in the slip under consideration until spelled out. Mr. F. afterwards varied his experiments by exhibiting the several names written in large rosy characters, as though scratched with a bramble, on his arm, but these may be set aside as easily producible by chemical means; and, indeed, I have heard of an accomplished young lady who has declared that they can, with a little practice, be produced at pleasure upon any arm, and who proved it by writing them on her own. Mr. F.'s remarks upon the spiritual agency were of the usual

[1] *Times*, 13th March, 1862. [2] *Ibid.*, 15th March.

character, and not worth recording. But to revert, for a moment, to the only point really deserving attention, the clairvoyant reading, I confess I am at a loss to suggest any explanation of this complete and clever mystery, or mystification, excepting that it is clairvoyance."[1]

If this were all, it would be difficult to suggest an explanation of the mystery. But Spicer, like other "good" sitters, omits to mention, and probably did not at the time regard as of any importance, some actions of Foster's. After the séance had commenced, and at intervals during its progress, Foster would take up the pellets in his hands, and mix them together—"make hay of them," as a correspondent of the *Times* puts it.[2] Again, he probably asked his sitter, at an early period of the sitting, to look under the table, and satisfy himself that the raps were not produced by mechanical means;[3] or perhaps he held a piece of paper and a pencil under the table, and tried to get a name written by the spirits,[4] or drew his client's notice to a "spirit standing behind his chair."[5] It only becomes clear when several accounts are pieced together and compared that Foster habitually handled the pellets during the sitting, thus giving himself the opportunity of abstracting some from the heap; and that he habitually employed one device or another to distract the attention of the sitters whilst he read them. The account just quoted from Spicer affords an interesting illustration of the methods employed. It will have been observed that Spicer was recommended to include several blank papers amongst his pellets. This particular piece of advice was not tendered when there were several sitters, each contributing three or more pellets. The reason is obvious. From a heap of thirty pellets four or five might be safely abstracted without much risk of detection, but the absence of even one pellet from a scanty half-dozen would be liable to attract attention.[6]

[1] *Strange Things Among Us*, pp. 207–9, by H. Spicer. London, 1863.

[2] *Times*, March 17th, 1862; see also the accounts given by John Jones and Jacob Dixon of sittings with Redman (*Spiritual Magazine*, 1860, pp. 375, 378).

[3] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1862, p. 46.

[4] T. P. Barkas, *Outlines of Ten Years' Investigations*, p. 118.

[5] Letter in the *Times*, 17th March, 1862.

[6] At some séances given in America in 1872 Foster appears to have discarded the somewhat clumsy device employed in the sitting with Spicer just described. He boldly palmed the pellets, and substituted others. He found an opportunity for reading the pellets by continually relighting the cigar which he smoked throughout the sitting, the match being held in the hollow of his hand, as if to shelter it from a draught. At the critical point in his third sitting Mr. Truesdell, the sitter, seized the pellets on the table, and found them blank. Foster

A feature of Foster's séances upon which much stress was laid at the time was his ability, on occasion, to name and describe spirits whose names had not been previously written on the pellets. The chief instances which I have come across in the literature of the time are concerned with Mr. and Mrs. William Howitt and Colonel Drayson;[1] Dr. Ashburner and two friends;[2] and—on the occasion of a visit to Newcastle, to which he was invited by T. P. Barkas—his host and Dr. McLeod, sometime Secretary of the Spiritualist Association in that town.[3] It would be doing less than justice to Mr. Foster's undoubted abilities to suppose that he had neglected any opportunity of working up the dossiers of the prominent Spiritualists—and all the persons named were prominent in the movement—whom he was likely to meet.

The writing on the arm, it need hardly be said, may be imitated by any person on his own skin with a blunt pencil. And it is noteworthy that some sitters, more observant than the rest, have recorded that spasmodic movements and contortions of the medium's body preceded this manifestation.[4]

Of all the American mediums who from time to time during the last half-century have visited Europe none, perhaps, with the single exception of Home, have achieved so immediate and so wide a fame as the Davenport Brothers. For the initiated, indeed, their fame had already preceded them. Dr. Loomis, Professor of Chemistry and Toxicology in the Georgetown Medical College, U.S.A., had investigated the manifestations occurring in their presence, and had published his conviction that they were produced by a

then appears, after a little persuasion, to have owned up. (See *Bottom Facts Concerning Spiritualism*, p. 133. New York, 1883.)

[1] *Pioneers of the Spiritual Reformation*, p. 275, by Mrs. Howitt Watts.

[2] *Philosophy of Animal Magnetism*, p. 320. Ashburner does not give the names of his friends.

[3] *Outlines of Ten Years' Investigations*, pp. 111–31. Barkas gives a very full and unprejudiced account of several sittings with Foster, conducted under fairly good conditions, and reported at the time by himself. A careful study of these records serves to strengthen the conclusion indicated in the text: there is nothing recorded by Barkas which could not have been accomplished by a smart conjurer who kept his wits about him; and his failures (*e.g.* to indicate relationship until he had had hints from the sitters) are extremely significant.

[4] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1862, p. 46 (see also p. 45, letter from Jones and Allman); *Times*, March 17th, 1862; Barkas, *op. cit.*, p. 114. Truesdell (*op. cit.*, p. 166) describes in detail how Foster actually effected the writing on the arm. Carpenter (*Quarterly Review*, Oct., 1871) suggests that Foster read the names written by following the motion of the top of the pencil. But this explanation would obviously not fit all cases. In the *Seybert Report* (pp. 142–6) is an account by Dr. Furness of the methods employed for reading pellets by J. V. Mansfield, the "Spirit Postmaster." Mansfield's methods appear to have been much clumsier than Foster's.

power with which he was unacquainted. His report was reproduced at length in the *Spiritual Magazine*.[1] Moreover, the brothers came to this country under singularly fortunate auspices. They brought in their train not only a colleague named Fay, and the customary business manager, Palmer, but a chaplain, in the person of the Rev. J. B. Ferguson. Ferguson, as we have already seen,[2] was a man of considerable ability, high standing, and unquestioned sincerity. He appears to have accompanied the Davenports in order at once to testify to their good faith and to expound the philosophy of Spiritualism. There can be little doubt that his presence, and the guarantee implied, did much to secure that favourable prepossession on which, as we shall later see reason to believe, a medium's success primarily depends.[3]

The brothers were introduced to representatives of the Press at a meeting held at the house of Dion Boucicault, the dramatist, at the end of September, 1864. From a letter to the *Standard*[4] we quote the following account of the first part of the proceedings:—

". . . I was there from the beginning, and came upon the field of action as soon as the walnut cabinet (made very like a clothes-press or wardrobe) was erected on its trestles at one end of the apartment, with its back to the chimney. I examined it and found it too simple in construction to admit of any concealed machinery, and merely noted that the three doors into which its face was equally divided fastened on the inside by a flat and easily moved bolt, and that the middle door had a lozenge-shaped aperture in the upper portion, curtained from the inside with a small square of dark velvet. At sitting height round the inside of the cabinet was a narrow plank. On this at the opposed sides the Brothers Davenport took their seats facing each other; and as they so sat the closing of the door nearest either hid him from sight. Any two gentlemen of the company were then invited to bind them firmly with ropes, then produced, to the bench, hand and foot, as well as either knew how. One of the volunteers who presented himself for this office was nautical, and, accordingly, profound in the matter of knots. He had no doubt of the perfect rigidity of his fastening, nor indeed had the other gentleman, nor any of the company who

[1] 1864, p. 416. [2] Vol. I. p. 206.

[3] Several of the newspaper correspondents, in describing the Davenports' performances, take occasion to refer to Ferguson, and almost invariably with respect. Thus the *Lancet*: "His earnest and solemn appeal [to the audience to consider the phenomena seriously] was admirable"; and again, "a somewhat weak-headed but right honest gentleman" (*Lancet*, 29th Oct., 1864). Others refer to his intellectual abilities; thus Edwin Arnold in the *Daily Telegraph* (4th Oct. 1864): "a decidedly remarkable man, as those who encountered him in metaphysical discussions will probably acknowledge." [4] 3rd Oct., 1864.

examined the complicated ligatures which, passing through holes perforated in the bench, and connecting the ankles with the wrists of the patients, seemed to render all free motion, at any rate of arms or feet, an impossibility. It was suggested that the knees should also be made fast, but this was not deemed necessary. A guitar, a fiddle with its bow, a tambourine, a very heavy brass speaking-trumpet . . . and two handbells . . . were placed between the prisoners, and apparently out of their reach. The two side doors were then bolted from the inside . . . the bolt of the middle door was heard to be drawn from inside, hands then appeared at the lozenge-shaped aperture, one from each side of the cabinet, as it appeared, and jigged flittingly in front of the curtain, which was thrust slightly back. The hands were in a semi-obscurity, the gas by which the room was lighted having been slightly lowered, and the arms belonging to them not being visible from the smallness of the aperture, they looked ghostly enough to elicit a set of little awestruck ejaculations from the ladies present."

The *Times'* correspondent entered the room whilst the cabinet manifestations were still in progress, and his account of the latter part of the sitting, which is somewhat fuller than that of the *Standard*, is given below :—

"When I entered the room devoted to the 'manifestations' I found it occupied by a number of persons who attentively listened to a strange discordant concert held within a wardrobe placed at the end furthest from the door. When the sounds had ceased the wardrobe was opened, and three compartments were discovered, two of which were occupied by the Brothers Davenport, bound hand and foot with strong cords, like the most dangerous malefactors. The centre compartment held the musical instruments, and on each side of this sat the corded brothers. The ostensible theory is that the Davenports, bound as they were, produced a combination of noises, compared to which the performance of the most obtrusive German band that ever awakened the wrath of a Babbage is the harmony of the spheres. The cords are examined, the wardrobe is closed, the instruments are replaced, and presently, through an aperture in the centre door, a trumpet is hurled with violence. The wardrobe is reopened, and there are the Brothers Davenport corded as before.

"A change takes place in the manner of the performance. Hitherto the brothers have remained incarcerated in this box, while the audience are at liberty. They now leave the wardrobe and take their place in the middle of the room, where they are firmly bound to their chairs. The gentleman who officiates as their lecturer or spokesman even offers to drop sealing-wax on the knots, and requests anyone of the company to impress it with his own seal. On the evening of my visit this offer was not accepted, but the fault, if any,

lay with the investigators. When the lights had been extinguished, and as we were all seated round the room with hands joined, at the request of the lecturer, a most extraordinary 'manifestation' took place. The air was filled with the sound of instruments which we had seen laid upon a table, but which now seemed to be flying about the room, playing as they went, without the smallest respect to the heads of the visitors. Now a bell jingled close to your ear, now a guitar was struck immediately over your head, while every now and then a cold wind passed across the faces of the whole party. Sometimes a smart blow was administered, sometimes the knee was patted by a mysterious hand, divers shrieks from the members of the company indicating the side on which the more tangible 'manifestations' had taken place. A candle having been lighted, the brothers were seen still bound to their chairs, while some of the instruments had dropped into the laps of the visitors. I myself received a blow on the face from a floating guitar, which drew enough blood to necessitate the employment of towel and sponge.

"A new experiment was now made. Darkness having regained its supremacy, one of the brothers expressed a desire to be relieved of his coat. Returning light showed him in his shirt-sleeves, though his hands were still firmly bound behind his chair. It was now stated that he was prepared to put on the coat of any one of the company willing to 'loan' that article of attire, and an assenting gentleman having been found, the coat, after a short interval of darkness, was worn in proper fashion by a person for whom it had not been designed by the tailor. Finally, the brothers desired a release, and one of the company, certainly not an accomplice, requested that the rope might fall into his lap. During the interval of darkness a rushing sound as of swiftly drawn cords was audible, and the ropes reached the required knees, after striking the face of the person in the next chair.

"Such are the chief phenomena, which are, of course, referred by the operators to spiritual agency. To sum up the essential characteristics of the exhibition, it is sufficient to state that the brothers, when not shut up in the wardrobe, are bound while the candles are alight, perform their miracles in the dark, and on the return of light are found to be bound as before. The investigators into the means of operation have to ascertain whether the brothers are able to release themselves and resume their straitened condition during the intervals of darkness, *and whether, even if this is practicable, they can, without assistance, produce the effects described.*"[1]

The *Times'* correspondent, it will be seen, seems by no means sure that what he had witnessed were merely feats of conjuring. A correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*

[1] *Times*, Sept. 30th, 1864.

(understood to be Mr.—now Sir Edwin—Arnold) in like manner hesitates whether to class the feats as representing "the annihilation of what are called material laws," or some extraordinary physical dexterity; and whether to regard the believers in Spiritualism as "the embodiment of a mutual and colossal self-deceit, or the silent heralds of a social revolution which must shake the world."[1]

But, generally speaking, whilst editors were willing to allow their correspondents free expression of opinion, they were disinclined to commit themselves, or to suggest any explanation beyond conjuring, though it is obvious in some instances that the alternative of a new force was not looked upon as altogether out of court. Thus the *Standard*, in a special article, writes, on the occasion of a séance later in October, that the phenomena were "far more answerable [*i.e.* than on a previous occasion] to the pretensions put forward as to an occult cause in a hitherto undiscovered force of nature"; though maintaining that, until a more complete examination had established such claim, they must not be regarded as other than conjuring tricks.[2]

And, indeed, the phenomena did strongly suggest conjuring tricks. The *Lancet*, in a very careful and curiously open-minded article, insisted on the extreme difficulty of securing satisfactory ligatures under any circumstances, and especially with the cord provided by the Davenports for the purpose. It was also pointed out that the brothers were apparently "possessed of great physical power and activity"; that in particular their hands were such as a professional conjurer might envy; and finally, that after each cabinet performance one or both brothers betrayed violent action of the heart, disturbed respiration, and other symptoms consistent with extreme muscular exertion.[3] And conjurers were not long in attempting to imitate the performance. These attempts were not always conspicuously successful.[4] But Tolmaque, or Tollemarque, who gave an exhibition at a private house at about this time, succeeded practically in doing all that the Davenports had done, and under similar conditions, so far as the somewhat vague accounts given will allow us to judge. He was three times bound, and, on at least one occasion, by persons who had helped to tie the Davenports.

[1] Letter from "Master of Arts," *Daily Telegraph*, 4th Oct., 1864.

[2] Oct. 24th, 1864. See, however, the leader in the same paper of the 1st Oct. and article on the 20th Oct.; the leader in the *Morning Star* of the 12th Oct., etc.

[3] *Lancet*, 8th Oct., 1864.

[4] See, for instance, the account given in the *Lancet* for 29th Oct., 1864, of Anderson's imitation.

A screen was placed in front of him, and the instruments in about half a minute began to play, and were afterwards thrown about the room. Within less than three minutes later Tolmaque was found unbound. He succeeded also when bound in divesting himself of his coat; and finally, he tied himself up again in less time than he had taken to loosen his bonds.[1]

It is probable, as the Spiritualists contended at the time, though they furnished no trustworthy authority for their contention, that Tolmaque, Anderson, and other contemporary conjurers did not succeed in releasing or in binding themselves with the same rapidity as the Davenports.[2] But as, on the hypothesis of trickery, the Davenport Brothers had been practising that particular feat for some years, and probably started with exceptional physical qualifications for its performance, it was hardly to be expected that a novice should perfect himself in a week or two. And even the Davenports worked under strict limitations. After a successful season in London they went to the provinces, and in Liverpool met with disaster. On the committee appointed from amongst the audience on the first night were two gentlemen who possessed the secret of a special knot, called the Tom Fool's knot. This knot they applied to the wrists of the Davenport Brothers. Each protested that the knot was unfairly tight, and injured the circulation. A doctor summoned to the platform gave it as his opinion that no injury to the circulation was to be apprehended, and that, in view of the smallness of the mediums' hands, the knot was not unnecessarily tight. The Davenports refused to proceed with the performance under such conditions, and Ferguson was ordered to cut the knots. The proceedings culminated on the next night in a riot, and the Davenports had to fly from the town. A like reception awaited them at Huddersfield and at Leeds, whither the fame of Tom Fool's knot had preceded them.[3] Their career in England was over for the time being, and the next three years, with the exception of a visit to Ireland, were spent on the Continent.

On their return to this country in 1868, at the instance of Mr. Robert Cooper, a fervent admirer, who had followed

[1] *The Builder*, 22nd Oct., 1864.

[2] Mr. Maskelyne himself admits this. He states that he practised the tricks for six weeks before reproducing them on the stage, and could not even then for some time equal the rapidity of the Davenports' performance (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 18th April, 1885.)

[3] *Liverpool Daily Post*, 14th, 15th, 16th Feb., 1865. In the *Post* of the 23rd Feb. a picture of the baffling knot is given.

in their train over the continent, the judgment of the Anthropological Society was sought upon their claims to supernormal powers. The Society agreed to appoint a committee of investigation; and, as a preliminary step, a trial séance was held, in order that the committee might determine the conditions of the subsequent inquiry. The séance was a failure, the committee reporting that "there were no 'manifestations' exhibited which were not capable of easy explanation; the performers declining to comply with nearly all the suggestions of the committee as to tying." The committee, however, offered to proceed with the investigation, on the conditions that they should themselves supply the ropes and other materials, should be allowed to hold the hands of the mediums during the "manifestations," to apply colouring matter to the hands either of mediums or "spirits," and to open the door of the cabinet as soon as a spirit hand appeared. The conditions were declined.[1]

It remains only to add that when, a few months later, Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke presented at the Crystal Palace a performance in imitation of that given by the Davenports, some Spiritualists, amongst them Benjamin Coleman, who was one of those most familiar with the Davenports' manifestations, found the imitation so complete that they saw no escape from the conclusion that Maskelyne and Cooke were themselves spirit mediums.[2]

This last position is characteristic of Spiritualist apologetics. All the stock feats of the mediums of this period, it will be seen, with the possible exception of Home, could be performed by practised physical dexterity, and were, in fact, with more or less complete success, imitated by such means again and again. The narrow margin of superiority in speed and adroitness which was all that Spiritualists themselves ventured to claim was no greater than the inaccuracy of credulous and untrained witnesses, or the longer apprenticeship of the medium-conjurer, would reasonably account for.

But these considerations had as little effect on the Spiritualists of that day as on the present generation of believers. To all such arguments and demonstrations there were two

[1] The correspondence is published in *Human Nature*, 1868, pp. 393–6.

[2] *Human Nature*, 1869, p. 303. For biographical details of the Brothers Davenport and an account, from the Spiritualist standpoint, of their tour in Europe, the reader should consult *A Biography of the Brothers Davenport*, by Dr. T. L. Nichols (London, 1864), and *Spiritual Experiences*, by Robert Cooper (London, 1867). J. W. Truesdell (*Bottom Facts*, pp. 228 *et seqq.*) describes various rope-tying tricks and the methods commonly employed by mediums for escaping from their bonds.

main answers. The first, which was adopted by some whose zeal outshone their knowledge, has been voiced by Benjamin Coleman. The other, which has been commonly held at all times by the better educated, and was at this time consistently advocated in the *Spiritual Magazine* in connection with the feats of Squire, Foster, and the Davenports, began by admitting that in certain circumstances and under certain conditions the feats performed by mediums could be paralleled by conjurers; nay, more, that on occasion genuine mediums supplied a temporary failure of the occult power by trickery. But it was contended that on various specified or unspecified occasions the conditions and the circumstances were such as to make trickery impossible, or the results achieved of a nature which no trickery could explain. At the present day, probably every believer in the Spiritualist phenomena who is capable of argument defends his position on these lines. The contention is obviously not illogical; nor to my thinking so preposterous as many critics have represented it. If a man has occult powers, and gains his livelihood by their exhibition, it is not *a priori* unlikely that, to obviate injury to his professional prospects and disappointment to his clients, he will sometimes conceal a temporary failure by adroit trickery. The only fair way to meet the Spiritualist contention is to study the evidence at its strongest. But the discerning reader will probably agree that, again apart from the evidence presented by Home's séances, no presumption of a new physical agency has been established by the records hitherto considered.

CHAPTER IV

PRIVATE MEDIUMSHIP, 1860–1870

NATIVE mediums were slow to follow the example set by their American colleagues. For the greater part of the decade now under consideration Mrs. Marshall appears to have been the only professional medium in England for physical manifestations. It is hardly necessary to consider her performances in detail. She was, in fact, the general practitioner of the movement, dealing for the most part with such commonplace phenomena as we have referred to at the beginning of the last chapter, but able on occasion to reproduce, on a smaller scale and with less distinction, most of the manifestations exhibited by specialists such as Home, Foster, or Mrs. Guppy. During some part of 1861 and 1862 Madame Besson, a professional clairvoyant, gave sittings at which raps, lights, movements of furniture, and other physical phenomena occurred. But we hear no more of her after the latter year.[1]

Towards the end of the decade several mediums who afterwards achieved distinction — amongst them Herne, Williams, and Duguid, and, of trance mediums, J. J. Morse —began to practise. But in October, 1867, the editor of *Human Nature* can find in London only two professional mediums, Mrs. Marshall and Mr. W. Wallace, to whom to refer inquirers.[2] And even in December, 1869, there appear to have been only three or four paid mediums in London.[3]

But throughout the period there were numerous private mediums, by whose agency tables were moved and raps and other phenomena obtained. For the most part, no doubt, the non-professional mediums exhibited only in the family circle. There were, however, several instances in which private persons gave, without fee or reward, regular séances to their friends and to inquirers introduced by them, at which

[1] See various notices of her séances in *Spiritual Magazine* for 1861 and 1862.
[2] *Human Nature*, 1867, p. 400. [3] *The Spiritualist*, vol. i. p. 12.

physical manifestations of various kinds were exhibited. One of the earliest of these private mediums was Mrs. Everitt, the wife of a tailor, living in Pentonville. Mrs. Everitt had apparently begun to give séances as early as 1855.[1] But her mediumship seems first to have attracted public attention at the end of the year 1867.[2] The sittings were generally prefaced with a prayer, or the reading of a chapter from the Bible. The lights were then extinguished; there were movements of the table, raps, and various other sounds; occasionally lights were seen, apparently not of a hallucinatory nature; and later, the "direct" spirit voice was heard, a cardboard tube being placed near the medium to assist this particular manifestation. On one or two occasions there were faint suspicions of trickery; but for the most part the performances seem to have been equally satisfactory to the medium and to her guests.[3]

Another private medium at this time who achieved some distinction, Mr. Edward Childs, owed his initiation to Mrs. Everitt. His manifestations consisted chiefly of direct writing, spirit voices, and flute-playing.[4] Master Willie Turketine, again, an intelligent boy of thirteen, would sit on a corner of the sofa in the dark, with an accordion, a triangle, a musical box, a tambourine, and other instruments of music placed near him. The rest of the company sat at the other end of the room and held each other's hands. If the conditions were favourable, the spirits would then sing and play on the various instruments. Unfortunately the presence of strangers was found to interfere with the manifestations, so that Master Turketine seems never to have attained the eminence which his abilities deserved.[5]

Another interesting private medium in the early years of

[1] *Human Nature*, 1869, p. 141.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1867, p. 400; *Spiritual Magazine*, 1868, pp. 83, 189.

[3] A notice appeared in the *Spiritual Magazine* for May, 1869, referring to charges of trickery against Mrs. Everitt, but no details are given. In the next month's issue the medium herself indignantly repudiated the charge. Later in the same year, with the object apparently of vindicating the medium's character, an account of a successful séance was published in the *Spiritual Magazine*, with the names of the sitters appended, including Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall and the Countess de Medina Pomar (*Spiritual Magazine*, 1869, p. 469). For other accounts of Mrs. Everitt's mediumship at this time see *Human Nature*, 1868, p. 387; 1869, p. 419.

[4] See *Spiritual Magazine*, 1869, pp. 266, 390, 566; 1870, p. 323. *Spiritualist*, 1870, p. 79, etc.

[5] See the extraordinarily naïve reports of the boy's performances given by W. Howitt, in the *Spiritual Magazine*, 1867, p. 562, and 1869, p. 427. The other Spiritualist journals also contain accounts of this audacious youngster's mediumship.

this decade was the first wife of Mr. Samuel Guppy, the author of *Mary Jane*.[1] In this lady's presence raps were heard; a guitar was played under the table; lights were seen in a dark room glowing at the tips of her fingers, which were observed to smell strongly of phosphorus; and coloured drawings of flowers were produced under the table.

But it was Mr. Guppy's second wife who is best known to fame. In the autumn of 1866 a new medium appeared in the person of a Miss Nichol, a young lady then living with Mrs. Sims, sister of the distinguished naturalist, Dr. A. R. Wallace. Dr. Wallace had at this time been investigating the subject of Spiritualism for a little over a year, and had just published his essay, *The Scientific Aspect of the Supernatural*.[2] Miss Nichol's mediumship, it will be seen, sprang up in a congenial environment. The manifestations began by the movement of various objects about the house, generally with Mrs. Sims and Miss Nichol as the only witnesses. One unusual characteristic about the early phenomena attracted Mrs. Sims' attention. The "power" was stronger the fewer the witnesses, and strongest of all in an empty room. Thus she writes:—

"These phenomena appear to me rather of a different nature to anything we have ever heard of or seen at our séances. . . . My friend's power does not seem nearly so strong when we sit with other persons who are anxious to see these wonderful phenomena. Some, though slight mediums themselves, seem to lessen the power rather than strengthen it. On leaving the room empty after a séance, there is no counteracting influence at work, and thus the spirits have more power for grand manifestations. We have never had anything so great happen when we were in the room as when we left it for a few minutes."[3]

Within a few weeks, however, the manifestations assumed a form which afterwards became very familiar in Spiritualist circles. Dr. Wallace himself describes the new development:—

"On Friday morning, December 14th, my sister, Mrs. S., had a message purporting to be from her deceased brother William to this effect: 'Go into the dark at Alfred's this evening, and I will show that I am with you.' On arriving in the evening with Miss N., my sister told me of this message. When our other friends, four in number, had arrived, we sat down as usual, but instead of having raps on the table as on previous occasions, the room and the

[1] *Mary Jane; or, Spiritualism Chemically explained, with Spirit Drawings.* London, 1863. [2] London, 1866. [3] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1867, p. 51.

table shook violently; and, finding we had no other manifestations, I mentioned the message that had been received, and we all adjourned into the next room, and the doors and windows being shut, sat down round a table (which we had previously cleared of books, etc.) holding each other's hands. Raps soon began, and we were told to draw back from the table. This we did, but thinking it better to see how we were placed before beginning the séance, I rose up to turn on the gas,[1] which was down to a blue point, when, just as my hand was reaching it, the medium, who was close to me, cried out and started, saying that something cold and wet was thrown on her face. This caused her to tremble violently, and I took her hand to calm her, and it then struck me this was done to prevent me lighting the gas. We then sat still, and in a few moments several of the party saw faintly that something was appearing on the table. The medium saw a hand, others what seemed flowers. These became more distinct, and someone put his hand on the table and said, 'There *are* flowers here!' Obtaining a light, we were all thunderstruck to see the table half covered with flowers and fern leaves, all fresh, cold, and damp with dew, as if they had that moment been brought out of the night air. They were the ordinary winter flowers, which are cultivated in hot-houses for table decoration, the stems apparently cut off as if for a bouquet. They consisted of fifteen chrysanthemums, six variegated anemones, four tulips, five orange-berried solanums, six ferns of two sorts, one *Auricula sinensis* with nine flowers, thirty-seven stalks in all."[2]

Dr. Wallace's account of this séance is corroborated by Mr. H. T. Humphreys, another of those present.[3]

In the course of the following year, as the medium's power grew, similar manifestations were given in other circles, the most notable occasion being a séance on the 14th June at Baron de Guldenstubbé's house in London. About a dozen persons were present, most of them well-known Spiritualists, including Mrs. Makdougall Gregory (widow of the Professor), Signor Damiani, Dr. McLeod, James Burns, the Spiritualist publisher, Robert Cooper, and the recorder, William Tebb, afterwards well known for his anti-vaccination propaganda. There were raps and other phenomena, but the climax of the séance was the discovery of a wreath of flowers and ferns on the head of Mademoiselle de Guldenstubbé. This manifestation had been preceded by a curious ceremony. Miss Nichol, under spirit direction, had walked ten times round the table —the room of course being darkened—touching each member

[1] Dr. Wallace, it will be observed, has not stated whether the room was lighted when they adjourned to it, or whether they had—as may perhaps be inferred from this passage—taken their places in the dark.

[2] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1867, p. 51. [3] *Ibid.*, 1867, p. 144.

of the circle as she passed.[1] On other occasions grapes, fruit, bread, even live eels and lobsters, were introduced and distributed to the sitters.[2] In the same year we find the rudimentary stage of a manifestation which in its later and more highly evolved form was destined to make the name of Mrs. Guppy famous in the annals of Spiritualism. On several occasions Miss Nichol, an extremely heavy woman, was lifted bodily on to the table without the attendant circle being aware of any movement on her part. This manifestation appears always to have taken place in the dark; but Dr. Wallace nevertheless regards it as "a test experiment perhaps even more conclusive than the flotation of Mr. Home."[3]

Miss Nichol was shortly afterwards married to Mr. Samuel Guppy, and resided for some time on the Continent, returning to England in the autumn of 1870.

That the manifestations witnessed in the presence of Mrs. Guppy, Mrs. Everitt, Mr. Childs, and the other non-professional mediums of the period are to be ascribed to anything beyond the familiar mechanical forces I see no reason to believe. It seems clear that there was nothing in the material conditions of the experiments to preclude such agencies. The tests imposed upon Foster and the Davenport Brothers were no doubt in most cases ludicrously inadequate to prevent trickery. But at any rate, the investigators were not hampered by any social restraints in seeking to impose them. It was difficult, however, for Mrs. Guppy's personal friends or Mrs. Everitt's guests to enjoy a similar freedom; and from the published records it seems clear that the precautions occasionally taken, with the permission, if not at the actual suggestion, of the medium herself, were quite ineffectual in themselves, and were carried out by persons whose training and temper would have rendered even better-devised precautions of little value. It will, I think, be conceded by any impartial person who reads the contemporary records that, notwithstanding that the private medium presumably lacked the long training in feats of dexterity which we are entitled to assume in the case of professionals, the physical obstacles in the way of fraud at these private séances were quite inconsiderable.

[1] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1867, p. 324.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1867, pp. 346–9, 494; 1868, p. 28, etc.
[3] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1867, p. 255. See his *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, 2nd edition (1881), pp. 132–7, for some further account of early séances with Miss Nichol. See also *Experiences in Spiritualism*, by Catherine Berry, and *Evenings at Home in Spiritual Séance*, by Georgiana Houghton; also *The Spiritualist*, 1870, pp. 92, 98, etc.

The hypothesis of fraud, however, presents certain moral difficulties. No doubt to a boy of thirteen the excitement of sitting up late to bamboozle his elders may have seemed a sufficient recompense for his trouble. But the best-known private mediums at this period and later have not been children, and in the case of adults an adequate motive cannot always be discovered. Certainly their rewards were not paid in cash down, though, no doubt, as in the case of Home, there may sometimes have been the prospect, and even the partial realisation, of considerable pecuniary rewards. But Mrs. Guppy, even during the few months in which, as Miss Nichol, she practised as a professional Mesmerist, can scarcely have found her main incentive in the hope of gain. On the assumption of fraud, the mere cost of the flowers lavished on her sitters must have swallowed up any probable profit from her increased mesmeric *clientèle*. And even such a motive would have ceased with her marriage. Mrs. Everitt, again, was in quite comfortable circumstances. Not only did she receive no direct payment for her sittings, but, as I am assured by some who have enjoyed her hospitality, she kept open house for her friends and for the strangers invited to witness her mediumship.

Nor is it easy to conceive that, for a perfectly sane mind, such motives as the hope of enhanced social prestige, or the mere pleasure of deceiving, would have sufficient strength and permanence. The unutterable monotony of dark séances continued through half a lifetime, with the same unvarying round of trivial "phenomena," forces us to look for some other explanation than deliberate and spontaneous fraud. It is probable that our knowledge of the subject does not at present admit of a complete explanation being furnished. But some indications of the lines on which an explanation should be sought can, I think, be found.

The decade now under consideration is peculiarly favourable for a wide survey of the evidence. There is, in the first place, an abundance of literature, periodical and other, filled with recitals of personal experience. Moreover, towards the end of the period the Dialectical Society appointed a committee to inquire into the subject of Spiritualism, and a large number of representative believers appeared to give evidence before them. A prominent feature in all these recitals by believers of their personal experience is the frequency of hallucinations and other subjective manifestations, and the perplexing admixture of the subjective happenings with occurrences of an unquestionably objective kind. Thus

Dr. Hugh McLeod records that his wife and daughter are strong mediums; that not only do they see spirits daily, but that such phenomena as bell-ringing, loud knockings, and other inexplicable noises were at one time of common occurrence in his house. Dr. McLeod for a time saw nothing; but, after sitting for long periods with his wife and daughter in the dark, he seems ultimately to have shared their visions of many-coloured lights and spirit forms.[1] A more detailed account of an experience somewhat similar was communicated to the Dialectical Society by Mr. F. Fusedale:—

"8, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.,
"*July 9th*, 1869.

" . . . my wife has possessed the power of seeing spirits for years, and does continue to see them, although what I am about to relate to you took place [some two or three years ago]. I may say that the phenomenon was witnessed by my wife, her sister, a girl then about twelve years old, and three of my own children, a boy about eleven and two girls about five and eight years respectively. The commencement of these extraordinary manifestations began by the moving of the furniture of the bedrooms at the top of the house, where we all slept. The tables, the washstand, and the looking-glass were constantly being moved about the room, and the looking-glass and ornaments were put on the bed, and then put back in their places again without ever doing any injury to them; and then began the rapping downstairs, on the chairs and tables, and all round the rooms; and then they commenced to take any little things of the children's or my wife's, and hide them for a time and then return them again; and the children and my wife would see the things they took (in particular a brooch of my wife's) appear to pass through solid substances, such as the wall or the doors, when they were taken from them; and they would take things out of the children's hands, as if in play, and hide them, and then after a little time return them again.

"After this another phase began. They all began to see spirits; and let me state they saw both good and evil ones—the good were bright and the evil dark. And I believe I am not going beyond the truth when I state that for six months we never sat down to meals without having audible evidence of their presence by their rapping on the table and chairs we were sitting on, and they would answer any question asked them by replying 'yes' or 'no' in the usual way; and they would also show the children pictures on the wall, and they would look in rapture on what they saw. Sometimes the scenes appeared to be scenes in distant lands, for they would write

[1] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1866, pp. 170, 171. I have written "seems to have shared," because Dr. McLeod, who gives no details, does not expressly state, what his narrative implies, that he himself saw any of these things.

the nature of the scenery, and sometimes scenes from the spirit land. . . . And they all used to show them graphical scenes in a crystal, or, more correctly speaking, simply a toy ball silvered taken from a Christmas tree; . . . I have seen them so engaged (I mean the children) for half an hour at a time, the scenes constantly changing; and let me state that I was a little sceptical at first myself about what they saw, but they (the spirit friends) told me they would show me a scene in the crystal to convince me of the truth of what they said, which they did by showing me a scene in the Arctic regions—a ship embedded in the ice, the men on board, and dogs coming to them on the ice—which scene the children also saw. . . . They would also guide their hands to write while sitting at the table, merely with their fingers, without pencil, and if the others sitting beside them would read what they wrote they said it appeared in illuminated letters on the table; and my wife would also see different objects on the table. . . . I have also seen the chair move by request with my little boy sitting on it, his legs not being able to touch the floor, more than half across the room while we were seated round the table, with a bright lamp burning at the time, without any effort on his part or any human agency being near."[1]

We have here, it will be seen, a Poltergeist of the characteristic type. The special point of interest is that the hallucinatory experiences claimed by Mrs. Fusedale and the children were on one occasion shared by Mr. Fusedale himself.[2]

There are many other visual experiences of a similar kind. Thus the Master of Lindsay and others relate that they saw visions in a crystal in the presence of Home.[3] The Hon. Mrs. —— and others saw ghostly figures and spirit eyes at a séance given by Home in her own house.[4] That these figures, etc., were hallucinatory may be inferred from the express statement of another Spiritualist, Mrs. Honywood, who was present at the same séance, that she could not see what the others described at the time.[5] So, at a séance with Miss Nichol one Whit Sunday, Miss Houghton tells us that she saw just before her eyes eight tongues of flame. From the description these were no doubt hallucinatory.[6] It is hardly necessary to give in detail instances of crystal vision

[1] *Dialectical Society's Report*, pp. 255–7.

[2] Of course, the evidence for the hallucinations experienced by the children, apart from the question of their good faith, is second-hand, and Mr. Fusedale's solitary experience of the same kind is not described until two or three years after the event.

[3] *Dialectical Report*, pp. 206, 259.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 128.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 367.

[6] *Evenings at Home in Spiritual Séance*, vol. i. p. 135.

at this time; the experience was, of course, a very common one.

Again, as indicated in chapter ii., many seers and seeresses professed habitually to see coloured auras and spiritual emblems round their friends. Mrs. de Morgan and a young companion on one occasion saw a vision of three bright heads over a clergyman in the pulpit;[1] Miss Houghton occasionally saw a coloured aura—violet or green—round the preacher, indicating the spiritual sphere to which he belonged.[2] Mr. Cromwell Varley, the well-known electrician, describes several spirits which appeared to him at times of death or serious illness. Mrs. Varley also occasionally saw spirits.[3] Other persons gave accounts of occasional apparitions seen by them.[4] Miss Anna Blackwell and her friends appear to have seen many ghosts. Here is an extract from her own experiences:—

"Of the many spirits whom I have seen, only two have been those of persons known to me in my present life; one of these I have seen once, the other I have seen eight times. One evening, on nearing the door of my dressing-room, I suddenly saw, just before me, a little to my left, what looked like a dark-haired man, in ordinary dress, in the act of passing through the wall in front of me. His head was slightly thrown back, his eyes were raised, and his face wore a sad, dreamy, and fixed expression. . . . On another occasion I saw in the same room, standing in the air like the 'saints and angels' in old pictures, a group of eighteen or twenty handsome young men, in white tunics, with red belts and buskins, and curious red hats, with 'cream-bowl' crowns and very broad brims, embroidered with gold, and set on so slantingly that the thin line of gold on the edge of the brims produced, round each head, something like the effect of a nimbus. The right hand of each grasped a stout crook, taller than himself, and resting on the ground. They looked as though they had halted on the march; and the eyes of all were fixed upon me with grave, earnest, and rather friendly gaze. After looking at them for a few seconds, I put my hands to my eyes; and then, looking up again to see if they were still there, I saw the same group, but much higher up, at a height, apparently, far above the ceiling and proportionally fainter. This second glimpse was only instantaneous; and though I looked up several times during the evening in the hope of seeing them again, I saw nothing more of my white-vestured visitants."[5]

[1] *From Matter to Spirit*, p. 71.
[2] *Evenings at Home*, etc., vol. i. pp. 26, 27.
[3] *Report of Dialectical Society*, pp. 157 *et seq.*
[4] See also evidence of Mr. Simkiss, *Report*, p. 131; Mrs. Rowcroft, p. 149; Mr. Rowcroft, p. 211.
[5] *Dialectical Report*, p. 332.

Miss Blackwell describes also other spiritual visitants to herself, and gives many accounts of ghostly figures seen by her friends. The late Mrs. Howitt Watts and her circle also saw many apparitions, mostly of persons known to them. In the columns of the *Spiritual Magazine* at this time we find numerous records of death-wraiths, ghosts of the dead, and other apparitions. Some of the best-attested specimens of the former class have been quoted in *Phantasms of the Living*.[1]

The hearing of voices—that is, of voices so far externalised as to be comparable to the visions just described—was a much rarer experience. The most marked case in the literature of the time is that of Mr. Percival, a gentleman who had spent some time in an asylum.[2]

Tactile hallucinations are as a rule too trivial or too ambiguous to be worth recording. But one curious experience may perhaps be entered under this heading. The witness is again Miss Houghton, who writes:—

"At the time I speak of it frequently occurred to me while I was out that for a considerable distance my feet would never touch the ground. I was apparently walking like anyone else, but there was a space between me and the earth. Sometimes it would be done without my thinking about it, and I would suddenly discover what was happening; at other times I would ask for it, and was never refused, but when first it came it was a source of utter astonishment."[3]

But the commonest subjective experiences were the various forms of motor automatism, writing, drawing, speaking, hearing of the "inner" voice, impressions and impulses of various kinds.[4] Of automatic writing, drawing, and speaking

[1] See, for instance, *Spiritual Magazine*, 1860, pp. 280–5; 1861, pp. 235, 544; 1862, p. 457.

[2] *Dialectical Report*, p. 222; *Spiritual Magazine*, 1860, pp. 379, 384.

[3] *Evenings at Home*, vol. i. p. 29. As these experiences are alleged to have occurred in 1861 or 1862, and Miss Houghton's record of them was not published until 1881, it is perhaps more probable that we have to deal, not with a sensory hallucination at all, but with a hallucination of memory. The same remark is, of course, applicable to a large proportion of the descriptions of subjective experiences quoted in the present chapter. When the account is not based upon any contemporary notes, and the witness is without training and sometimes incapable of accurate observation, it is impossible to say to what extent the experience of the moment may have become transfigured in the retrospect.

[4] I have thought it best to class all these experiences together, because, though it is likely that the actual experiences may have been of very different kinds, the descriptions given by the subjects are so vague, and so profoundly coloured by their prepossessions, that it seems impracticable to classify them more accurately.

the specimens cited in chapter ii. of the present book and in chapter v. of Book II. will no doubt suffice.[1] All these forms of manifestation continued during the present period, but the results were obviously received by Spiritualists in a more critical temper. As already noted, a large part of the pages of the *Spiritual Telegraph* was devoted to inspired essays and trance addresses; but such productions rarely find a place in the later periodicals, the *Spiritual Magazine*, *Human Nature*, or the *Spiritualist*. Some inspirational discourses of Mrs. Emma Hardinge, however, were published in book form at this time.[2] And there were a few other "inspired" publications: *Songs of the Spirit*, by H.; *An Angel's Message*, and the *Divinum Humanum*, by a Lady.[3] We read also of essays in philosophy written through the hand of a boy of eleven;[4] and of a new version of the Bible, prepared by the Nottingham Circle, of which J. G. H. Brown was, presumably, the mouthpiece.[5] A witness before the Dialectical Society describes his experiences in speaking with "tongues."[6]

Of spirit-drawing, again, mostly of the symbolical kind, we have elaborate accounts, especially from Mrs. Berry and Miss Houghton, in the works already referred to. Of the former lady's productions we learn that, though they conveyed "no definite ideas" to the spectator's mind, and represented nothing in the animal, vegetable, or mineral kingdoms,

[1] Some further illustrations are given below, in chap. viii. of the present book.

[2] *Extemporaneous Addresses*, London, 1866. See *Spiritual Magazine*, 1865, pp. 398–400, for an interesting account by Mrs. Hardinge of her "impressional" speaking.

[3] The lady in question, we learn from the *Spiritual Magazine* (1870, p. 384), was a Miss Fawcet, who died in 1870. Between 1855 and her death she published several volumes of "spiritual revealings," including, besides those mentioned in the text, *Primæval Man* and *Ecce Homo*. The two that I have read are more nearly akin to the writings of Harris than of A. J. Davis, though the latter philosopher has incorporated some quotations from one of Miss Fawcet's books in one of his own inspired writings (see *ante*, Vol. I. p. 168, footnote). Miss Fawcet's writings present a mystical Christianity obviously inspired by Swedenborg. Many of the doctrines and much of the phraseology are characteristic of Swedenborg. We read of a spiritual within the natural sense of the Bible; that the biblical narratives were not literal histories, but allegories; also of the dependence of all other worlds of Creation upon our earth. Characteristic features of later mysticism appear in the doctrines of spiritual counterparts and mystical generation, and in the lofty position assigned to woman in the New Dispensation—"Woman is the handmaiden of Deity." There is some curious information, almost in the Swedenborgian manner, about the inhabitants of other worlds, and the rather odd statement that the form of angels and of perfected human spirits is invariably spherical.

[4] See *Spiritual Magazine*, 1869, p. 453.

[5] *Ibid.*, 1863, p. 219; see account of Brown, *ante*, pp. 41–2.

[6] *Dialectical Report*, p. 183.

yet their technical manipulation was inimitable.[1] Two of Miss Houghton's pictures earned the distinction of being rejected by the Royal Academy; and the poor lady spent the bulk of her small fortune in opening a public exhibition of her spirit-drawings at a small gallery in Bond Street.[2]

The drawing, writing, and speaking were, no doubt, often in the fullest sense automatic—the action being both unconscious and involuntary. And though in other cases the process of writing, speaking, etc., was apparently accompanied by some degree of consciousness, there is no reason to question the substantial accuracy of the "medium's" statement, that he did not consciously will the process, and could not foresee its direction or its final result. But the case was different when the motor impulse chose less deeply worn channels. Many persons of unquestioned integrity have claimed to be the recipients of an "impression"—sometimes alternatively described as "an inner voice," or "an impulse"—directing a certain course of action. Very frequently the resultant action was concerned with healing by mesmeric passes. Thus Mr. Lowenthal before the Dialectical Committee:—

"On one occasion I entered a room in a hydropathic establishment, and a gentleman followed me, and I was compelled to walk up to him and speak to him. I immediately felt all sorts of ailments. I at once told him to sit down, and commenced walking round him, making all sorts of passes."

The subject of the passes, we are told, felt greatly relieved.[3]

Mrs. Berry records similar instances in her own experience.[4] Frequently the impression prescribed a journey, even of considerable length, a visit to a friend, the purchase of a book, or other article. An instructive account of these motor impulses is given by Miss Houghton in the book already referred to. On one occasion, being anxious to find her way to a house which she had not visited for several years, she entrusted herself to spirit guidance, and arrived safely.[5] Again, in presence of Mr. Spear, she was impressed to personate the dying and the resurrection of St. Stephen.[6] One evening her guardian spirits (a band of seventy archangels) guided

[1] *Experiences in Spiritualism*, pp. 51, 167, etc.

[2] *Evenings at Home*, vol. i. p. 90. In the *Spiritual Magazine*, 1867, p. 289, we have an account of automatic drawings of butterflies, etc., by an artist called Rippon.

[3] *Dialectical Report*, p. 183.

[4] *Experiences*, p. 177; see also p. 22.

[5] Vol. i. p. 28.

[6] Page 65.

her hand to stir some arrowroot which had curdled.[1] Again, when house-hunting in Paddington, she gave herself up to the guidance of the spirits. "I went about, from street to street, asking always whether I should turn to the right hand or the left."[2] Eventually a house was found by this means; and the "spirits" then chose the wall-papers and carpets, and superintended the hanging of the pictures.[3]

Miss Houghton's case was by no means exceptional. I have myself known Spiritualists of intelligence and capacity at their first conversion yield themselves wholly for a time to such vague "impressions," until the folly of the proceeding was brought home to them. Most educated Spiritualists, however, soon recognise that, in impressions of this kind, the involuntary nature of the impulse (on which, in their view, the proof of its external inspiration depended) could not be satisfactorily tested; and saw no doubt also the danger of abandoning themselves to the guidance of such random impulses. Mr. John Jones (J. Enmore Jones), in his evidence before the Dialectical Committee, makes no mention of his earlier impressional experiences; nor do such impressions bulk at all largely in the literature of the time. But when, as with children generally and with some adults, the power of self-criticism is almost wanting, and especially when there is some powerful but imperfectly realised motive, such as the desire to attract attention, to be subserved, it is easy to see how half-conscious impulses of this kind might pass almost insensibly into systematic self-deception.

In brief, if we take a wide survey of the evidence, we find that at this period there was a marked outbreak of what the Spiritualists called mediumistic powers under various forms, in persons of unquestioned good faith; and that these powers were readily communicated from one person to another. Nothing is more noteworthy in the records of the time than the extraordinary contagion of so-called "mediumship." We have seen in chapter ii. of the present book how an epidemic of automatic writing and drawing spread amongst the friends of Mrs. de Morgan and Mrs. Newton Crosland, and how a like contagion seized Mr. and Mrs. William Howitt after inspecting the spirit-drawings in the Wilkinson family. Mr. Morell Theobald, in turn, was "initiated into writing mediumship" by William Howitt.[4] So Miss Houghton, Mrs. Berry,

[1] Page 71. [2] Page 109.

[3] Page 111. See also Mr. John Jones's account of similar spirit impressions, *British Spiritual Telegraph*, vol. i. pp. 109, 164, and J. Murray Spear's experiences already referred to (vol. i. p. 216).

[4] *Spirit Workers in the Home Circle*, p. 18.

and other automatic writers and speakers have left on record that their mediumship originated in a suggestion made at a chance visit to Mrs. Marshall or some other medium; and that others were continually inspired by their example to like feats of automatism.

Again, it is pertinent to recall the fact—whatever weight we may attach to it—that physical mediums have frequently claimed, or their friends have claimed on their behalf, various hallucinatory experiences. Thus Mrs. Guppy is said by her father to have seen strange figures as a child;[1] Home claims to have seen spiritual forms and heard voices in his youth;[2] and Charles Williams has described similar experiences, one in connection with his dead mother.[3] Miss Florence Cook (Mrs. Corner) claims to have seen spirits and heard voices from childhood,[4] and Mrs. Showers tells us that her daughter Mary as a child would constantly converse with invisible interlocutors.[5]

Attention has already been drawn to the close analogy with the physical phenomena of the séance-room presented by those spontaneous outbreaks of bell-ringing and stone-throwing which from time to time perplex a country village.[6] And I have elsewhere shown that in many cases the author or "medium" of these disturbances was not only afflicted with some physical or mental abnormality, but that both he and the witnesses of his performances appear to have been liable to visual and auditory hallucination.[7]

It seems not unreasonable to conclude, therefore, that mediums, whether professional or private, physical or merely clairvoyant, clairaudient, or inspirational, have, as Spiritualists themselves contend, certain common characteristics; that private physical mediums generally, and many professionals, at least at the outset of their career, are to be ranked in one class with amiable enthusiasts like Miss Houghton, Mrs. Berry, Mr. Cromwell Varley, and Miss Anna Blackwell; and that all alike, again in accordance with the Spiritualist contention, may be to some extent unconscious of their ions, and therefore not fully responsible for them. In rn terminology, the medium, whether "physical" or ssional," is probably a person of unstable nervous ium, in whom the control normally exercised by the

[1] *itual Magazine*, 1867, p. 213.
[2] *Incidents in My Life*, first series.
[3] *itual Magazine*, 1867, p. 524.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1872, p. 516.
[5] *itualist*, 1873, p. 488.
[6] Book I. chap. ii., on "Poltergeists."
[7] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xii. pp. 45–115, and *Studies in Psychical Research*, n "Poltergeists."

higher brain-centres is liable, on slight provocation, to be abrogated, leaving the organism, as in dream or somnambulism, to the guidance of impulses which in a state of unimpaired consciousness would have been suppressed before they could have resulted in action.

Of course, the deviation from the normal here suggested may be, especially at the outset, quite inconsiderable; no greater, indeed, than that of the good hypnotic subject, and probably of like kind. Now most persons, probably, at certain times and under certain conditions, are amenable to hypnotic suggestion. The medium then, if this view be accepted, is not necessarily on the road to insanity, nor even, in any considerable degree, abnormal. Nor would the possibility of such a slight deviation from the normal constitute a serious argument either for or against the possession by the medium of supernormal powers, although it renders intelligible the absence of adequate motive for the trickery apparently practised. It is not difficult to conjecture how the beginnings of physical mediumship might originate in the partly conscious exaggeration of an automatic impulse. The wholly involuntary movements of the muscles which, as Faraday showed, were responsible at the outset for the rotation of the table, might develop into deliberate pushing, without perhaps any clear consciousness of deception on the part of the pusher. At some point, however, in the career of a physical medium (unless we are to suppose a barrier between the séance consciousness and that of ordinary life, of which we rarely have sufficient evidence) the conviction of cheating must surely be borne in upon the offender. And it is difficult to believe, except on the extreme assumption of a trance consciousness wholly cut off from the normal life, that such a point had not been reached before, *e.g.*, flowers and vegetables were purchased and stowed away for after-production at the dark circle. Difficult, but perhaps not impossible, for the analogy of the "post-hypnotic promise" suggests even here a way out. We have experimental evidence that an action undertaken by the trance consciousness may be fulfilled at the appointed time during waking hours, without the knowledge of the waking agent.[1]

[1] The question of the moral responsibility of the private medium for his physical performances will be further considered in Book IV., chaps. v., vi., and vii.

CHAPTER V

PHYSICAL MEDIUMSHIP IN GENERAL, 1870 AND ONWARDS

HITHERTO, it will be seen, the class of professional physical mediums was almost unrepresented in this country. After the departure of the American invaders there remained for some years only Mrs. Marshall. In the meantime, however, as shown in the last chapter, a band of private mediums had sprung up, and others, notably Miss Cook and Miss Showers, were shortly to come on the stage. But admission to their circles was, by the necessities of the case, restricted to the few; and those inquirers who were not fortunate enough to acquire the entry to one or other of these private circles found some difficulty in obtaining the evidence which they desired. A new medium, Mr. F. Herne, had, indeed, so early as January, 1869, begun to give public sittings, but the manifestations do not appear to have comprised any physical phenomena. Mr. Herne saw spirits in the air, and described the colour of the sitter's aura, who had to rest content with such second-hand information.[1]

In the following year we find Herne giving a sitting at Dr. Dixon's house, at which the phenomenon of "elongation" appeared.[2] J. J. Morse, who had for some time past been delivering addresses in the trance, is also recorded to have exhibited about the same time similar phenomena.[3] But whilst Mr. Morse thereafter remained exclusively a trance and inspirational medium, Herne soon developed other physical manifestations. Early in 1871 he joined in partnership with Charles Williams, and together they began to give public séances at 61, Lamb's Conduit Street, an address familiar to London Spiritualists for many years to come.

[1] *Spiritualist*, Nov. 19, 1869; *Spirit People*, p. 37, by W. H. Harrison. London, 1875. [2] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1870, p. 399.
[3] *Medium*, Aug. 19th, 1870.

The manifestations at these early séances consisted, in the light, merely of raps and tilts of the table. When the lights were extinguished, however, this meagre programme was enlarged—there were spirit voices, the touches of spirit hands, spirit lights, flowers spirit-borne, floating musical instruments, and much displacement of the lighter furniture.[1]

Soon other native mediums appeared to share the spoil: Eglinton, Monck, Rita, Miss Wood and Miss Fairlamb, Miss Stokes; whilst Miss Kate Fox (afterwards Mrs. Jencken), Mrs. Holmes, Miss (or Mrs.) Annie Eva Fay, Messrs. Bastian and Taylor, Dr. Slade, and others came over from the United States. In the year 1870 a new private medium, the Rev. W. Stainton Moses, known for many years under the pseudonym of "M.A. Oxon," made his début. The manifestations which occurred through this gentleman's mediumship, including almost every chronicled variety of physical phenomena, together with trance writing and speaking, clairvoyance, and messages from the dead, will be considered in a later chapter.[2] Mrs. Guppy, Mrs. Everitt, David Duguid, and other private mediums also continued their circles; and the first-named lady especially distinguished herself by her patronage of her professional brethren, Messrs. Herne and Williams, who held their first public sitting under her auspices. On the other hand, Mrs. Guppy on more than one occasion assisted in exposing or embarrassing rival pretenders to mediumship.[3] She subsequently married Mr. Volckman, the gentleman who seized the "spirit" at Miss Cook's séance.[4]

It would be unprofitable to attempt an exhaustive chronicle of the mediumistic performances of the last thirty years in this country. Two special forms of manifestation—materialisation and spirit photography—will be dealt with in some detail in the two following chapters, whilst the subject of slate-writing is reserved for separate treatment hereafter.[5] Apart from these elaborate performances there is little worthy of note. Herne and Williams' early séances, already referred to, are a fair type of the evidence for spirit operation put before the ordinary inquirer. The sittings were nearly always held in the dark, or under illumination so faint as to preclude any possibility of accurate observation; active investigation on the part of any too curious sitters was discouraged by the

[1] *Spiritualist*, 15th April, 1871; *Spiritual Magazine*, 1871, pp. 183, 233.

[2] Book IV. chap. v.

[3] See, for instance, a note in the *Spiritualist*, 31st July, 1874, in which Mrs. Guppy is accused of having suborned a youth to disturb séances given by Mr. Holmes and Mrs. Bassett.

[4] See below, p. 103.

[5] Book IV. chap. ii.

linking of hands; suspicious sounds were drowned by the noise of the musical-box or by the request on the part of the "spirits" that all present should join in singing, so as to promote the harmony of the circle. Finally, the phenomena presented under such conditions were as a rule palpably within the capacity of any fairly active and intelligent mortal who had acquired with practice some manual dexterity. Outside the special manifestations to be considered later, there were hardly any secrets of the trade to be learnt. The one item which could be considered to come under this head was the method practised by the medium for releasing his hands—or more generally one hand only—from the grasp of the sitter on either side. This trick was exposed so far back as 1875 by Moncure Conway,[1] and has been well described recently by Dr. Hodgson in connection with the performances of Eusapia Paladino.[2]

To us looking back on these earlier records the marvel is that any body of men could have been deceived for so long by trickery so cheap and clumsy. Partly, no doubt, the deception was helped by the fact that there were here and there manifestations whose explanation did not lie on the surface—such as the performances of Foster, Slade, and Home. But the real secret of the ready credence accorded for more than two decades to these dark séances lies in the overwhelming predisposition to belief on the part of the assistants. By what arts of the medium, aided by what causes outside the medium's control, this predisposition to belief was produced, is a question which will receive consideration in a later chapter. Of its prepotent influence at this period no one who studies the literature of Spiritualism can doubt. The ordinary Spiritualist, though otherwise not infrequently shrewd in his estimate of the evidence, sometimes even trained in scientific observation, could hardly be induced to entertain the idea of wilful fraud. At one of the earliest séances at the rooms of Messrs. Herne and Williams Mr. W. H. Harrison, the editor of the *Spiritualist*, records that: "The name of a spirit was then written rapidly in large phosphorescent letters in the air near Mr. Williams. In the same rapid manner the spirits next began writing 'God bless——' when there was a snap, like an electrical discharge, and a flash of light which lit up the whole room." At the end of the sitting a slight smell of phosphorus was perceptible. To persons of a less unsuspicious nature than Mr. Harrison, the incident suggests the untimely bursting

[1] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1875, p. 285. [2] See below, Book IV. chap. i.

into flame of the head of a common lucifer match. But this interpretation does not appear to have presented itself to any of those present.[1] Other illustrations of the same state of mind will be given in the next chapter.

In the present chapter it is proposed briefly to describe some of the more striking or notorious of the manifestations which, during these years, were acclaimed as instances of spirit power. Of all these episodes, perhaps the most famous is the transit of Mrs. Guppy. The following account appeared in the form of a letter in the *Echo*:—[2]

"I attended a 'circle' at the house of the media, Messrs. Herne and Williams, last Saturday evening. I found the company composed of three ladies and seven or eight gentlemen, including the media, a few of whom, like myself, had never attended a professional séance before. The room we entered was on the first floor, and was separated from a smaller room at the back by folding doors, which were now, however, thrown open, so that we had every opportunity of examining the inner room. The only articles of furniture were a table with a musical-box upon it, and a few chairs. There was a small cupboard, with two or three shelves in it, which we saw open, and which contained nothing beyond one or two miscellaneous articles. Upon our sitting round the table, the folding doors were closed and locked, as was also the other door in the room, and I may say, as we were sitting before eight o'clock, and the only window in the room was darkened, neither of these doors could be opened without at once being perceptible in the room by the admission of a ray of light. The séance began by one of the media saying the Lord's Prayer, the company repeating it. The musical-box, which only played sacred music, was then wound up. Almost immediately we saw lights, somewhat similar to those emitted by glowworms, floating all about the room. The musical-box rose into the air, and continued playing while hovering over our heads and going first to one corner of the ceiling and then to another. We then heard voices, said to be those of the spirits of John King and Katie. John King's voice was a very deep one, while Katie's was more like a whisper, but perfectly distinct. If you could imagine a moth flitting about a room on a summer evening, one moment striking the ceiling and the next fluttering round your head, endowed with the faculty of whispering to you in its eccentric flight, you would be able to form a good idea of Katie's performance.

[1] *Spiritualist*, May 15th, 1872. A similar incident appears to have occurred a few days later, with Herne and Miss Cook as mediums. Several incidents of the kind are recorded in these earlier years, before the mediums acquired sufficient dexterity in manipulation to avoid such catastrophes.

[2] June 8th, 1871. Other accounts will be found in the *Medium*, June 15th; in the *Spiritual Magazine* for July, 1871; and in the *Spiritualist* for June 15th. The account in the *Spiritualist* is signed by all the eleven persons present.

When asked if she would bring us something, she said, 'Yes, yes.' One of the visitors, in a joking sort of way, remarked, 'I wish she would bring Mrs. G[uppy].' . . . Upon which another said, 'Good gracious! I hope not; she is one of the biggest women in London.' Katie's voice at once said, 'I will, I will, I will,' and John's rough voice shouted out, 'You can't do it, Katie,' but she appeared to chuckle and repeat, 'I will, I will.' We were all laughing and joking at the absurdity of the idea, when John's voice called out, 'Keep still, can't you?' In an instant somebody called out, 'Good God! there is something on my head,' simultaneously with a heavy bump on the table, and one or two screams. A match was instantly struck, and there was Mrs. G[uppy], standing on the centre of the table, with the whole of us seated round the table, closely packed together, as we sat at the commencement. John King's voice shouted out, 'Well, you *are* clever, Katie.' Both doors were still locked. Our attention was, however, directed to Mrs. G[uppy], who appeared to be in a trance, and perfectly motionless. Great fears were entertained that the shock would be injurious to her, supposing it to be really Mrs. G[uppy], and not some phantom in her image, but John's voice called out, 'She will soon be all right.' She had one arm over her eyes, with a pen in her hand, and an account-book in her other hand, which was hanging by her side. When she came round she seemed very much affected and began to cry. She told us that the last thing she could remember was that she was sitting at home, about three miles away, making up her week's accounts of household expenditure, and that Miss N[eyland] was in the room with her, reading the paper. The ink in the pen was wet, and the last word she had written, or, rather, begun to write, for it was one or two letters short of completion, was smeared and scarcely dry. From the joking remark about bringing Mrs. G[uppy] to the time that she was on the table three minutes did not elapse. The possibility of her being concealed in the room is as absurd as the idea of her acting in collusion with the media."

The editor of the *Echo* appends a note to this letter, stating that the writer is known to him as a "Manchester merchant of high respectability."

Several of the party at the conclusion of the séance escorted Mrs. Guppy to her house at Highbury. They there learnt from Miss Neyland, a friend of Mrs. Guppy's, who had come out as a medium under her auspices, that an hour or two previously she had been sitting with Mrs. Guppy near the fire making up the accounts, when suddenly looking up she found that her companion had disappeared, leaving a slight haze near the ceiling. Mr. Guppy, then upwards of eighty years of age, on being told of the disappearance of

his wife, remarked that no doubt the spirits had taken her, and shortly afterwards went down to supper.

From other accounts we learn that Mrs. Guppy suffered no harm from her adventure, and that the last word written in the account-book was "onions."

I find during the years 1871–4 records of three other similar transportations. Mrs. Guppy, or Messrs. Herne and Williams, or all three, were the mediums on each occasion; the persons transported were respectively Mr. Herne,[1] Miss Lottie Fowler,[2] and a Mr. Henderson.[3] Again, the well-known professional medium, Dr. Monck, is reported to have been transported by spirit agency from Bristol to Swindon.[4]

I will not weary the reader with other descriptions of levitations, nor attempt to recount the eels, live lobsters, strange fruits, and showers of feathers, with which the guests at Mrs. Guppy's séances were favoured. But the following is an incident somewhat out of the common. Miss Kate Fox, one of the original "Rochester rappers," had married, in 1872, Mr. H. D. Jencken, a London barrister. In the early spring of 1874 Mrs. Jencken was staying with her baby, then about five or six months old, at Brighton. One day Mr. Wason, a well-known Spiritualist from Liverpool, who shared their lodgings, witnessed the following portent. I quote his own words:—

"On the 5th of this month [March] I was in Mr. Jencken's apartments at 3, Lansdowne Terrace East, Western Road, Brighton, while Mrs. Jencken's baby was in the lap of the wet nurse, near the fire. It was about 1.30 p.m., in a well-lighted room facing south. Mrs. Jencken was also present.

"Suddenly the nurse exclaimed, 'Baby has got a pencil in his hand,' but as she did not then add that the pencil had been placed in the child's hand by invisible agency, I paid little attention to the remark. The nurse next exclaimed, 'Baby is writing!' Upon this Mrs. Jencken rushed forwards and called to me to come and see. I then looked over Mrs. Jencken's shoulder and saw the pencil in the hand of the child. It had just finished writing, and Mrs. Jencken, remembering what her medical man had told her about the manifestations injuring the baby's health, snatched the pencil out of the child's hand in a very excited manner. The nurse, who was frightened, said that 'she must give up her situation.' Mrs. Jencken told her that 'she might go,' but afterwards reasoned her out of her resolve.

"The message written by the baby was:—

[1] *Spiritual Magazine*, July, 1871, p. 289.
[2] *Spiritualist*, 15th March, 1872.
[3] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1874, p. 22.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1875, p. 55.

"'I love this little child. God bless him! Advise his father to go back to London on Monday by all means.—Susan.'

"Susan was the name of my departed wife."[1]

A facsimile of the infant medium's writing was later published in the *Medium and Daybreak*.[2] Mr. Jencken was afterwards the recipient of other signs and wonders, including a Greek sentence, with most of the accents and breathings omitted, written by direct spirit agency.[3]

In the summer of 1874 a new medium came to London from America, Mrs. Annie Eva Fay, who achieved a certain distinction in having been the subject of a test experiment by Sir W. Crookes, as described in a later chapter.[4] Mrs. Fay's mediumship was in another respect remarkable; the gentleman who acted as her business manager in the first instance appears subsequently to have established a rival show, at which he explained, with practical illustrations, the secret of her performances. These demonstrations seem hardly to have affected the Spiritualist belief in the medium's genuineness.[5] Her performance was of the same general type as those of the Davenport Brothers. The following extract shows how it impressed a contemporary Spiritualist:—

"Two strong staples were screwed into the jamb of a door in the corner of the room, and a curtain about six feet high tacked to the side of it. . . . The medium's hands were secured by tying tightly round each wrist a piece of strong inch-wide tape, well knotted. Her hands being placed behind her, the ends of the tape were tied together and sealed, the ends being secured to the lower staple; another tape was passed round her neck and firmly tied to the upper staple. She sat on a music stool, her feet placed on a cushion; these were tied round the ankles with a cord, the end of which was held by a lady sitter. The gas was partially turned down, a bell, a tambourine, and flageolet having been placed on her lap; an assistant—one of the party—held the curtain before the medium, the instruments were heard for a minute or so, were then thrown on the ground, and she called for 'light'; the knots were found secure. The next arrangement was the tambourine on her lap, in which was placed a glass of water; 'light down'—curtain held before her, the tambourine heard; 'light'—curtain withdrawn, and the tumbler, nearly empty, found to be held between her teeth; examination of knots. Guitar placed on her lap, which was twanged

[1] *Spiritualist*, March 20th, 1874; see also *Spiritual Magazine*, 1874, p. 186.
[2] 8th May, 1874. [3] *Medium*, *loc. cit.* [4] See below, chap. ix.
[5] See various notices of Mrs. Fay's mediumship in the *Medium* for 1875. It is fair to add that in the *Spiritual Magazine* for the same year her name does not seem to be mentioned.

and shown above the curtain; 'light'—all secure. . . . I cannot help making the reflection that, with all these marvellous manifestations, so many mediums seem to be totally unimpressed by the gravity of their mission."[1]

The present writer was never privileged to meet Mrs. Fay. In September, 1877, however, he attended a public performance given at Eastbourne by a Miss Nella Davenport, which in its essential features reproduced Mrs. Fay's public séances; so closely, indeed, that with a few exceptions—exceptions, however, in which the whole secret of the performance will be found to rest—he can endorse the description quoted from the *Medium*, both of the method of tying and of the subsequent manifestations. Briefly, the two pieces of tape which passed round the medium's wrists were tied together, and another short piece of the same tape was tied across the point of junction;[2] the free end of this latter piece of tape was attached, not direct to the lower staple, but to an iron ring three or four inches in diameter which passed through it. On the particular occasion referred to, moreover, Miss Davenport's manager, perhaps not rating too highly the intelligence of a provincial audience, announced that one of the committee on the platform would be allowed to be present behind the curtain during the performance. The choice fell upon myself; I was blindfolded and placed standing at the left side of the medium. As anyone who has taken part in blind man's buff is aware, it is practically impossible effectually to blindfold anyone against his will. After working my eyebrows a little I found that I could without difficulty, by raising my head slightly, get a glimpse of the medium's hands and arms. What I then saw I have only within the last few years learnt to interpret aright. Briefly, I saw the medium's bound hands, or one of them, rapidly seize the rim of an empty bucket which lay on her knees and place it on her head. The whole thing lasted only a few seconds, and, bound as she was by wrists and neck to the two staples behind her, the feat for many years seemed to me, despite the evidence of my senses, an impossible one. The explanation is, no doubt, that given by Mr. Truesdell in his *Bottom Facts concerning Spiritualism*.[3] The linen bracelet on the medium's right wrist slipped up her slender arm; the

[1] Letter from Mr. Henry Collen in *Medium*, 12th March, 1875.

[2] In my notes of the performance the length of the tape between the wrists is given as six inches, and of the cross-piece as five inches. But these measurements are conjectural; I had no opportunity for actual measurement.

[3] New York, 1883, pp. 238, etc.

piece of tape which was fastened at one end to the ring, at the other end to the linen strip connecting her wrists, was made to slip on the linen strip towards the left wrist; add the diameter of the iron ring, and it will be seen that Mrs. Fay and her imitators had at least a foot of free play for the right hand—quite enough to achieve all the marvels reported of them.[1]

Another noted figure at this time was David Duguid, the Glasgow painting medium. Duguid was a cabinet-maker by trade, who in 1866 discovered himself to be a medium. At first his powers were manifested in raps and visions. Later he began in the trance to paint, with his eyes apparently fast closed. This painting, it was claimed, was effected under the inspiration of Jacob Ruysdael and Jan Steen, and, in fact, one of the pictures produced was obviously a copy of a well-known work by the former of those artists—a work so well known that an engraving of it had appeared in a popular publication, *Cassell's Art Treasures Exhibitor*.[2] A year or two later, as the medium's powers developed, the type of manifestation changed. The sittings were now held in the dark, and the spirits of the Dutch artists produced their paintings direct, and no longer through the hand of the medium. In August, 1878, by the courtesy of Mr. H. Nisbet, I was admitted to one of these sittings. Two other persons were present, besides my host, the medium, and myself.

After a trance address, some ordinary photographer's cards, carte-de-visite size, were produced by the medium. The sitters were not allowed to touch these cards, lest they should interfere with the personal magnetism with which the cards were saturated. But in order that the visitor might be satisfied that no substitution was practised, a small corner was torn off each of the two cards selected for the experiment, and the fragments were handed to me. I placed them securely in my pocket. Duguid then, to quote my contemporary notes, "was fastened hands, arms, and legs to the chair by silk handkerchiefs, with adhesive paper on the ends." The lights were then extinguished, so that the only light came through a ground-glass panel in the door from a small gas-jet some distance off. The illumination was so faint that I, sitting in the circle four or five feet from the medium,

[1] Mr. Maskelyne (interview in *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 18th, 1885) gives a slightly different explanation of the trick, viz. that Mrs. Fay contrived that the knot on the right wrist should be a slip knot. But it is quite probable that both explanations are correct, and that, as in other cases, the medium had more than one string to her bow.

[2] *Human Nature*, 1868, p. 559.

could just make out against the background of the door the dark outline of his head, which apparently did not move throughout the experiment. I could see no gleam of white from the cards which lay on the table. After a quarter of an hour the lights were turned up, and two small oil-paintings, one circular, about the size of a penny, the other oval and slightly larger, were found on the two cards. The colours were still moist, and the fragments in my pocket fitted the torn corners of the cards. The two pictures, which lie before me as I write, represent respectively a small upland stream dashing over rocks, and a mountain lake with its shores bathed in a sunset glow. The paintings, though obviously executed with some haste, were hardly such as one can imagine to have been done in such a short interval and in almost complete darkness. For many years I was quite at a loss to understand how the feat could have been accomplished by normal means. The explanation which I have now no doubt to be correct is an extremely simple one. Duguid, it has been seen, would not suffer profane hands to touch the cards; and, when he had torn off the corner of a card, he no doubt dropped into the sitter's hand, not the piece torn from the blank card on the table, but a piece previously torn from a card on which a picture had already been painted.[1]

In the middle of July, 1876, there came to London a new American medium, "Dr." Henry Slade. Slade, whose fame had preceded him to our shores, was warmly welcomed by leading Spiritualists. Serjeant Cox, Dr. Carter Blake, Dr. Wyld, Mr. W. H. Harrison, and others had successful sittings with him, and published their experiences.[2] The following extract from an article in the *World*[3] gives a fair idea of the phenomena presented :—

"A highly-wrought nervous temperament, a dreamy mystical face, regular features, eyes luminous with expression, a rather sad smile, and a certain melancholy grace of manner were the impressions

[1] I do not know if it has ever been proved that this device was actually employed by Duguid; but it is obvious that, under the conditions described, it could have been employed, and that the so-called "test" was therefore worthless. In some later experiments in spirit photography, with Duguid as medium, Sir W. Crookes and others failed to obtain any conclusive results; but I understand that suspicious appearances were found on one of the plates. For accounts of Duguid's mediumship see *Human Nature*, 1868, p. 556, 1872, p. 90; *Spiritual Magazine*, 1872, p. 555; and *Hafed, Prince of Persia* (London, 1876). In chapter viii. some account will be given of his trance communications.

[2] See especially the *Spiritualist* for July 21, 1876, and onwards; and *Experiments with Dr. Slade*, by George King; privately printed, no date (apparently 1876).

[3] 30th Aug. 1876.

conveyed by the tall lithe figure introduced to me as Dr. Slade. He is the sort of man you would pick out of a roomful as an enthusiast. He at once invited me into a back room on the same floor, in the centre of which stood a small table, without a cloth or other covering. We were now alone together, the door was closed, and, responding to Dr. Slade's invitation, I seated myself at one side of the table, he also sitting at it sideways. The corner of the table was between us. The table was about five feet by four, had four legs, no ledge below or covering upon it. It would be difficult to imagine anything simpler or more aboveboard, as we both placed our palms upon it.

"Dr. Slade's long, white, nervous fingers had scarcely touched mine when a violent knocking began. The doctor became visibly agitated. There is no mistaking the signs of genuine agitation; and I may say at once that Dr. Slade's own transitions of expression, his excitement, and subsequent exhaustion, impressed me as strongly as anything which happened during this curious interview. 'You are a medium, sir,' he gasped; and I, feeling like the man who had talked prose all his life without knowing it, smiled feebly, as if to say, 'So you've found me out.' The knocking immediately became more vehement, and the doctor declared the spirit (of his wife) wished to pronounce upon my claims to mediumship. There were a couple of ordinary-looking school slates lying near, and taking one of these, and placing on it loosely a tiny piece of common slate-pencil, bitten from a stick and about the size of a grain of wheat, the doctor held the slate under the table with one hand, saying at the same time, 'Is this gentleman a medium, Allie?' The words were hardly spoken before there was a sound of writing, followed by two or three vigorous taps. The slate was looked at, and 'He is not,' in a flowing hand, was written on it.

"Then came more and violent knockings at the table, a chair at the farthest corner from Dr. Slade was lifted rapidly in the air and hurled to the ground without visible agency. My coat and trousers were plucked violently, and I was pinched and patted, all with great rapidity, and in quarters which it seemed absolutely impossible Dr. Slade could reach. A hand appeared and disappeared fitfully, but with unmistakable reality, close to me; and when the slate was produced with a similar crumb of pencil, once on it when it was held under the table, and once under it when it was placed on the table, messages of various kinds were inscribed rapidly and in different handwritings. One, the longest, was of a religious character, and inculcated the usual religious lessons. Others were in reply to questions in which I pressed hard for a communication on some subject which could be only known to myself. Dr. Slade did not discourage this, but said, 'We can but try; write the name of the deceased person you wish to communicate with on the side of the slate I cannot see, and we'll ask if he be present.' I did so, and the answer came promptly that —— (giving the initials of the name

I had written) was not present. I tried again, writing another name. The slate was held under the table, and a message came in the first person, signed with the Christian name in full and the initial of the surname, saying, 'I cannot write more at present,' or something equally vague."

* * * * * *

"I had not, and have not, a glimmering of an idea how the effects described had been produced, and I came away inexpressibly puzzled and perplexed."

The present writer paid a visit to Slade early in September of this year, and was profoundly impressed with the performance.[1] Moreover, it appeared at the discussion which followed the reading of Professor Barrett's paper at the British Association meeting of the same year, that several men of science had visited Slade, and were unable to explain what they saw in his presence. Lord Rayleigh mentioned that he had gone to Slade in company with a professional conjurer, who had admitted that he was completely puzzled.[2]

Slade's triumphant career, however, was speedily cut short. On the 16th of September, 1876, within a few days of the British Association meeting, there appeared in the *Times* a letter from Professor Ray Lankester setting forth the results of a visit which he, in company with Dr. Donkin, had paid to Slade the previous day. Having satisfied himself at a previous visit, by close observation of Slade's movements and general demeanour, that the medium wrote the messages with his own hand upon the slate while it was being held under the table, Professor Lankester put his hypothesis to the test by snatching the slate out of Slade's hand before the ostensible sound of writing was heard, at a time when, presumably, therefore, the spirits had not begun to write. As he anticipated, he found the message already written. No doubt to an observer in Professor Lankester's position the demonstration of fraud left nothing to be desired. He had seen the movements of Slade's arm in the act of writing, and had found the writing so produced, where and when no writing should have been. But the Spiritualists were perhaps justified in not accepting the incident as conclusive. Slade defended himself by asserting that, immediately before the slate was snatched from his hand, he had heard the spirit writing, and had said so, but that his words were lost in the

[1] See my article in *Human Nature* for Oct., 1876, "A Modern Miracle."
[2] See the report of the discussion in the *Glasgow Herald*, Sept. 13th, 1876.

confusion which followed. If we grant that Slade's testimony was as good as Professor Lankester's or Dr. Donkin's, it was difficult summarily to dismiss this plea. Moreover, as Mr. C. C. Massey and others pointed out,[1] the exposure was at all events incomplete. Slade's best "tests" were given when the slate was held above the table and never allowed to be out of the observer's sight; sentences had been written under such conditions, it was alleged, on the sitter's own slate, brought with him for the purpose, or even on the inside of a double-folding slate.

Others were confident that their messages had been written on the upper side of the slate, which was of course inaccessible to Slade when pressed tightly against the table; or, again, that the writing had been produced when Slade's hand was not in contact with the slate at all; that Slade's nails were pared so close that it was impossible for him to have held a fragment of slate pencil as suggested by Professor Lankester; that the touches and movements of furniture were such as could not have been effected by Slade's hands or feet; and, finally, that pertinent answers had been given to questions written on a slate held out of the medium's sight. Even if it was admitted that Dr. Lankester had demonstrated trickery on the occasion in question, there was much in Slade's performance that remained obscure: the explanation offered was not effective.[2]

The incident had a disastrous sequel for Dr. Slade. Professor Lankester obtained a summons against him for unlawfully using subtle craft to deceive certain persons, to wit: E. Ray Lankester, Henry Sidgwick, R. H. Hutton, Edmund Gurney, and W. B. Carpenter. After a hearing which lasted for several days Slade was found guilty, and sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labour. He appealed against the sentence. The appeal was heard on the 29th June, 1877, the prosecution in this instance being undertaken by the Treasury. The conviction was, however, quashed at the outset, on the ground that the words "by palmistry or otherwise," which appeared in the statute, had been omitted. Slade at once left the country, and the fresh summons which was issued at the instance of Professor Lankester on the

[1] Letter to the *Times*, 18th Sept., 1876, and correspondence on following days.

[2] Professor Lankester clearly underrated Slade's skill, and, by implication, the intelligence of those whom Slade deceived. Mr. Maskelyne states that it cost him "a few weeks' hard practice" to imitate Slade's performances (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 20th April, 1885).

following day was effectual only in preventing him from ever returning.[1]

I will conclude this chapter by citing a display of mediumship of a somewhat different type, which will serve as an illustration, extreme, perhaps, but by no means unparalleled, of Spiritualist manifestations in private life, and of the attitude adopted by believers.

Mr. Morell Theobald was at the time of which I speak a well-known Spiritualist. He had been for some years a friend and near neighbour of Mr. and Mrs. Everitt, and had constantly witnessed direct writing and other manifestations through their mediumship. Moreover, the gift of automatic writing had developed in members of his own family; his sister had published a record of spirit communications received through her hand;[2] and Mr. Theobald himself had been a writing-medium for some years, having, indeed, been first initiated by William Howitt, some time in the later fifties.[3]

In the early part of 1882 one Mary entered Mr. Theobald's service as cook. It soon appeared that the new cook possessed mediumistic powers of a high order, and she was welcomed into the family and treated as a friend. In 1883, on the occasion of the housemaid's leaving Mr. Theobald's service, his daughter agreed to share Mary's room and to help her with the work of the house. Mary's mediumistic powers from this time developed rapidly. She had, apparently, always been averse to early rising, and unpunctual breakfasts had resulted. Now, in the autumn of 1883, the spirits relieved their medium of the most irksome portion of her domestic duties; the fires were lit and the breakfast-table laid, day after day, by unseen agencies. Soon other manifestations followed; spirit-writings were found on walls and ceilings, in locked receptacles, or were produced under test conditions on marked paper at séances. These writings were in many languages—English, German, Old French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Raratongan. The handwriting was described as being in many cases so small as to defy human imitation. Amongst the numerous spirits who communicated in this way one especially calls for mention: Saadi, a poet of ancient Persia, not only wrote passages from his own poems, and gave

[1] The subject of slate-writing will be further discussed below, Book IV. chap. ii.

[2] *Heaven opened; or, Messages for the bereaved from their little ones in Glory*, by F. J. T. London, 1870.

[3] See Mr. Theobald's account in *Spirit Workers in the Home Circle*, p. 18.

a brief account of his life, with dates and other particulars, but even showed himself to two members of the circle, who reported that he had "black hair, with a dark, flowing beard, penetrating eyes, and a lovely face."

Mr. Theobald, in the spring of 1884, kindly afforded to myself and a fellow-member of the Society for Psychical Research, the late Mr. Frank S. Hughes, the opportunity to investigate such of these marvellous occurrences as lent themselves to investigation. We could not, indeed, be witnesses to the laying of the breakfast, the lighting of fires, or the performance of other humble domestic offices by the invisible agencies, since the action of the human eye was found to be inimical to such phenomena, which took place, even in the presence of the master of the house, only when his back happened to be turned. But the writings on the ceilings and the walls we did see, and noted a remarkable peculiarity about them. When the writing occurred on the woodwork of the doorway or on other spots accessible to a person of ordinary stature, mounted on a chair, the letters were regularly formed and of normal size. When the writing occurred on a high ceiling, the writing was much larger, and the letters straggling and irregular, as might be the case if the writing had chanced to have been formed by a maid-servant standing in uncertain poise on a step-ladder, or armed with pencil attached to a broomstick.[1] We were also shown the exact spot where the spirit-writings were wont to appear in a locked secretaire; and my companion, without much difficulty, when the secretaire was locked, pushed a piece of paper through the chink in the flap and caused it to fall on the same spot. Indeed, Mr. Theobald unwittingly gave important testimony as to the value of this particular "test." Aware of the difficulty of getting the exact test sought, he had nevertheless ventured to ask the spirits to write on a manuscript which he locked

[1] In some of the writings which are reproduced in Mr. Theobald's book, already alluded to, the characteristics referred to in the text are plainly discernible. Compare, for instance, the large, irregular, and *tremulous* writing of the first sentence reproduced in Plate II. (p. 141) with the small and well-formed writing in the next two sentences. The first sentence was written on the cornice of the ceiling, the others in more accessible positions. The ceilings, it may be mentioned, are eleven feet high; the house-steps are five feet eight inches high (*op. cit.*, p. 235). But Mr. Theobald says (p. 141) that the writings on the ceilings are "out of reach of anyone to do, even on our house-steps, which I mounted in order to try." It may be added that we learn from Mr. Theobald that Mary was physically incapable of standing on steps, because, apparently, she suffered from vertigo. But no evidence is offered for the truth of this statement.

up in the secretaire aforesaid. The "test" given was some writing on another piece of paper subsequently introduced into the secretaire, and found in the position above described. "I seldom get exactly what I seek," he writes in reference to this incident, "but something equally satisfactory in the way of proof."[1] Again, we were shown the "direct spirit-writings" of superhuman fineness, some of which are reproduced in Mr. Theobald's book, and we satisfied ourselves by actual experiment that any educated person with a little time and patience and a sharp pencil could produce with ease writing as small and not less legible. The Latin and Greek had many mistakes; some even of the letters in the Greek being incorrectly formed, and accents and breathings omitted.[2] Nor could we discover that in any case the "test" conditions under which these writings were asserted to have been produced were such as to preclude fraud of the most obvious kind.

But the poetry of Saadi still remained to be accounted for. Whilst I was puzzling over the problem, a friend placed in my hands Part VI. of *Chambers's Repository of Instructive and Amusing Tracts*, a once popular and widely circulated series. From an article on "Persian Poetry in the Past" were derived, it appeared, all the translations of Persian poetry quoted by the Spirit Saadi, and all the particulars of his life and death which he had vouchsafed to give to this nineteenth-century domestic circle. It seemed hardly worth while to revisit earth after so many centuries only to furnish information which was accessible to any English schoolboy. But there were some interesting variations in the spirit poetry, indicating an imperfect understanding of his subject on the part of their author. Moreover, Saadi, in the seclusion of this quiet suburban household, had ventured to claim as his own a poem written by somebody else. But even this feat was surpassed by another Persian spirit called Wamik,

[1] *Light*, 1884, p. 244.

[2] It seemed to me, from a close inspection of the original, quite clear that the Greek sentence shown to me had been written by a person ignorant of the language. I pointed out to Mr. Theobald at the time (see my letter in *Light* of Jan. 24th, 1885) that there were numerous mistakes in spelling and in the formation of the letters. Mr. Theobald, in republishing the quotation (*Spirit Workers*, p. 213), adopts a conjectural interpretation of the disputed words. It is to be regretted, since the matter has been publicly discussed, and the accuracy of his treatment challenged, that he did not give a facsimile reproduction of this quotation, as he has of another and later Greek spirit-writing (*op. cit.*, Plate VIII., p. 298). The "spirit" has, however, profited by my criticism, and the later Greek writing is much less open to unfavourable comment.

who gave himself out as Saadi's friend, and communicated as his own no less than eighteen lines of poetry, signed "Wamik Zerdusht," adding the interesting information, "Wamik was burnt to death at Abyssinia; he lived in this life before 636." Here was, indeed, news from the spirit world, for, according to Sir W. Jones,[1] Wamik was no friend of Saadi, had written no poetry, and had no claim to the name Zerdusht, having, in fact, never lived in this life at all. For Wamik was the imaginary hero of the poem to which the spirit had subscribed his name.[2]

The result of the investigations made by Mr. Hughes and myself I communicated in a series of letters to *Light*.[3] The editor of that periodical expressed his opinion that my "difficulties" (*i.e.* in accepting these spiritual revelations) "arose wholly and solely from the incomplete and hasty investigation" which I had accorded to the phenomena. Mr. Theobald's own attitude towards criticism is summed up in the following extract from the book in which, some years later, he gave the full history of his spiritual experiences in the home circle. "Such phenomena," he writes, "can never be received until faith in accredited narrators and reliance on the commonplace integrity of ordinarily reputable people is admitted as one of the canons of scientific attestation."[4]

[1] Quoted in the tract referred to.

[2] Mr. Theobald, in reply to this criticism, suggested—a suggestion borrowed, no doubt, from a more famous literary controversy—that the poem in question was not written by Wamik, its hero, but by another person of the same name (*op. cit.*, p. 175).

[3] January, February, March, 1885.

[4] *Op cit.*, p. 291. The account in the text, which is reproduced, with some additions, from my earlier work, *Studies in Psychical Research*, is based partly on Mr. Theobald's book, partly on his letters to *Light* in 1884 and 1885.

CHAPTER VI

MATERIALISATION

THE crowning achievement of later Spiritualism, the presentation of a visible and palpable figure, purporting to be a spirit form temporarily materialised for the occasion, was late in its appearance on the stage in this country. There were, indeed, some who professed to have seen spirit forms at the early séances; but there can be little doubt that in some cases at least, since they were not visible to all the sitters, these forms were hallucinations, or at most hallucinatory distortions of real objects imperfectly seen in the dim light.[1] In a letter published in the first number of the *Spiritualist* (November, 1869) Mr. S. C. Hall relates that, at a sitting with Home as medium, he saw the figure of his deceased sister. As the figure was apparently visible to others also, and especially as it was not in the first instance recognised by Mr. Hall, it is possible that this may have been a case of spirit impersonation on the part of the medium. But the details given are not sufficient to enable us to form an opinion.

In America, however, "materialised" spirit forms made their appearance at an early stage in the history of the movement. In October, 1860, Robert Dale Owen held a sitting with three members of the Underhill family (Mrs. Underhill, the medium in the present case, was one of the Fox sisters), at which a veiled and luminous female figure presented itself and walked about the room. In January of the following year began the famous series of sittings with Kate Fox and Mr. Livermore, a New York banker. Mr. Livermore, when prostrated with grief at the recent loss of his wife, was persuaded by Dr. Gray, one of the Spiritualist pioneers in America, to endeavour to open up communication through a medium. In the event he held nearly four hundred sittings, extending over six years, with

[1] See above, p. 70, and below, Book IV. chap. iv.

Kate Fox. At the earlier sittings, and indeed throughout the entire series, with the exception of a few occasions on which one or more trusted friends, such as Dr. Gray, were admitted, Mr. Livermore sat alone with the medium, and in the dark. Under these exceptionally favourable conditions there appeared, clothed in shining raiment, a female figure, which was readily recognised by the sitter as that of his deceased wife. Later Benjamin Franklin also appeared, and was seen by Dr. Gray and others.[1]

In the latter part of 1871 the American papers contained accounts of sittings held with a new medium, Mrs. Andrews, at the house of a farmer named Keeler, in Moravia, New York, not far from Auburn. At these sittings spirit hands and faces were shown from the cabinet; and spirit forms, frequently recognised as those of deceased relations, walked about the room and conversed with the sitters.

Simultaneously with the receipt in England, through the Spiritualist Press, of news of these doings came the publication of Dale Owen's book, with reports of the earlier materialisations already referred to. English mediums, who had not hitherto advanced beyond the occasional production, under favourable conditions, of arms and faces, were naturally put upon their mettle not to be altogether outdone by their American colleagues. Mrs. Guppy was first in the field. In January, 1872, a meeting was held at Mr. Guppy's house, among those present being the Countess de Medina Pomar and the Hon. Cholmondeley Pennell. The mediums—Mrs. Guppy and another lady, unnamed—retired to the cabinet, a common wooden cupboard fastened against a corner of the room, with several window-openings cut in the side facing the circle. The lights were extinguished, but moonlight was allowed to enter the room through the uncovered windows. Under these conditions the faces of the two mediums were thrust through one of the lower openings of the cabinet, and a small face, "as white as alabaster," appeared simultaneously at an upper opening. Neither this face nor a similar one, which appeared later, were recognised, nor did they speak or make any movement beyond nodding in answer to questions. The performance, except for the darkness and the presence of the distinguished guests, seems to have been rather like a Punch and Judy show, and was not regarded as a conspicuous success.[2]

[1] *The Debatable Land*, by R. D. Owen, pp. 366–408. London, 1871.

[2] *Spiritualist*, 1872, p. 9. An account of a séance held a few weeks later, with similar results, will be found on page 17.

In April of this year the leading professional mediums, Messrs. Herne and Williams, took up the subject, and at their dark séances shadowy forms and faces began to appear and move about the room. The forms were rendered visible in the partial darkness by a faintly luminous smoke or vaporous substance, and were accompanied by a smell of phosphorus, which the editor of the *Spiritualist* assures us was extremely faint.[1] But it was a new medium, Miss Florence Cook—then a girl of sixteen—who first exhibited materialisation in its full development in a good light. Miss Cook attended several of the early sittings at the rooms of Herne and Williams; and later she and Herne had some successful materialisations at Mr. Cook's house at Hackney. From this point Miss Cook, soon discarding Herne's assistance, appears to have given regular séances on her own account. At the outset Miss Cook (at the present time a professional medium under the name of Mrs. Corner) took no money for her séances; and, shortly after she had begun to give regular sittings, a wealthy citizen of Manchester, Mr. Charles Blackburn, came forward and undertook to pay her an annual retaining fee, that she might be free to give her services when required.

In this manner Miss Cook was placed in much the same position as Mrs. Guppy and other non-professional mediums. Though receiving a substantial payment for the exercise of her gifts, she was in no way beholden to the individual sitters who attended her circles. They were invited guests of herself or her family, and for the most part accepted without question the restraints imposed by that condition. The following extracts from two articles which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* will show how her performances appeared to a contemporary writer.[2] After describing the medium, "a pretty Jewish-like little girl," and the other persons present, all members of the medium's family, or well-known Spiritualists, the writer continues:—

"A sort of corner cupboard had been fitted up with two doors opening in the usual manner from the centre, and an aperture of some eighteen inches square in the fixed portion at the top. At this I was told the faces would appear. A lamp on a table in the other corner of the room was so arranged as to shed a bright light on this opening, whilst it left the rest of the small apartment in subdued, but still in full light. I examined the cupboard or cabinet

[1] *Spiritualist*, 1872, p. 33.
[2] *Daily Telegraph*, Oct. 10th, 1872, article on "Spirit Faces," by "Our Own Commissioner."

carefully, put a chair in, and saw little Miss Blank carefully shut up inside, like a pot of jam or a pound of candles. A rope was put in her lap, the object of which will appear anon, and we all sat round like a party of grown-up children waiting for the magic-lantern.

"We were told to sing, and so we did—at least the rest did, for the songs were spiritualistic ones for the most part, which I did not know. They were pretty, cheerful little hymns, such as 'Hand in hand with Angels,' 'The Beautiful River,' and Longfellow's 'Footsteps of Angels.' By-and-by raps inside the cupboard door told us to 'open sesame.' We did so; and there was pretty Miss Blank tied round the neck, arms, and legs to the chair, in a very uncomfortable and apparently secure manner. We sealed the knots, shut her up in the cupboard, and warbled again. After some delay a face rose gently to the aperture rather far back, but presently came well to the front. It was slightly pale, and the head was swathed in white drapery. The eyes were fixed, and altogether it looked ghostly. It remained for some time, disappeared and reappeared; and the lamp was turned full upon it, but the eyes never lost their fixed stare, and showed no symptom of winking. After several minutes it went altogether. The doors were opened, and little Miss Blank was found still tied, with seals unbroken, and to all appearance in a deep sleep. . . . After a good deal more singing than I cared about, another appearance took place in obedience to the command of the doctor, who had been in the East, and asked to see a Parsee friend. After some delay, a head appeared, surmounted by a turban, and with a decidedly Eastern expression of countenance and dark complexion. It did not satisfy the doctor, who declared that the face bore a resemblance to the one demanded, but that the headgear was not *en régle*. This was Tableau No. 2. . . . In Scene the Third the face was quite different. The head was still surmounted by white drapery, but a black band was over the forehead, like a nun's hood. The teeth were projecting, and the expression of the face sad. They fancied it was a spirit that was pained at not being recognised. When this face disappeared, Kate came again for a little while, and allowed me to go up to the cupboard and touch her face and hand, after first putting to me the pertinent question, 'Do you squeeze?' On assuring her I did not do anything so improper, the manipulations were permitted. This was the finale, and the circle broke up forthwith. The gentleman from Manchester was delighted, and all the Spiritualists, of course, were loud in their commendations."

In the following year the same writer gives an account of a later phase of the manifestations:—

"In a short time, however, Katie—as the familiar of Miss B. was termed—thought she would be able to 'materialise' herself so far as

to present the whole form, if we arranged the corner cupboard so as to admit of her doing so. Accordingly we opened the door, and from it suspended a rug or two opening in the centre, after the fashion of a Bedouin Arab's tent, formed a semicircle, sat and sang Longfellow's 'Footsteps of Angels.' Therein occurs the passage, 'Then the forms of the departed enter at the open door.' And, lo and behold, though we had left Miss B. tied and sealed to her chair, and clad in an ordinary black dress somewhat voluminous as to the skirts, a tall female figure draped classically in white, with bare arms and feet, did enter at the open door, or rather down the centre from between the two rugs, and stood statuelike before us, spoke a few words, and retired; after which we entered the Bedouin tent and found pretty Miss B. with her dress as before, knots and seals secure, and her boots on! This was Form No. 1, the first I had ever seen. It looked as material as myself; and on a subsequent occasion—for I have seen it several times—we took four very good photographic portraits of it by magnesium light. The difficulty I still felt, with the form as with the faces, was that it seemed so thoroughly material and flesh and blood like."[1]

Whilst Miss Cook was still giving her séances a new private medium came on the stage. Mrs. Showers, the widow of General Showers, was living at Teignmouth, with one daughter, Mary, who at the time when the manifestations began was sixteen years old. The attention of the family was called to the accounts of Spiritualism in London, and they began to hold nightly séances for themselves in the spring of 1872. The tables moved, messages were spelt out by the raps, and Miss Mary Showers and the servant Ellen professed to see spirits moving about the room, amongst them John King and Peter. Direct writing, at first in spiegel-schrift, followed. Then a young gentleman named H. appeared upon the scene. He came in one evening to bid farewell before starting for Australia. At his entrance the dining-room table started to run across the room by itself. Mrs. Showers tells us that, herself by this time accustomed to such marvels, she tried to divert her guest's attention by suggesting that he should dry his feet—it being a wet night—at the kitchen fire. Immediately after his departure from the room on this errand a crash was heard, and Mrs. Showers, hastening to the kitchen, found Mr. H. standing on the kitchen floor in a pool of soup. He assured her that the saucepan had jumped off the fire at his entrance. Moreover, two large dish-covers, no unusual

[1] *Daily Telegraph*, 12th Aug., 1873. Another account of Miss Cook's early séances will be found in Mr. Dunphy's article, "Modern Mysteries," in *London Society*, Feb., 1874.

occurrence at that period, Mrs. Showers tells us, were seen to be suspended from the bell wires. From this precarious eminence they shortly descended with a crash on the china below. Then other manifestations of the usual Poltergeist order followed. Mr. H.'s chair was snatched away from him as he attempted to sit down at table. Sofa cushions, egg-cups, flower-pots, umbrellas, pots of jam, chairs, ottomans, a roll of lard, and other things flew about the house. Scraps of paper, inscribed with doggerel rhymes, fluttered down from the ceiling. Mr. H. developed into a seeing medium, and recognised John King, in luminous robe and turban, and Peter, in a shooting coat, sitting on the sofa. Mr. H. shortly afterwards left for Australia, but the spiritual forces continued to develop. Peter now communicated with Mrs. Showers through the "direct" voice, and finally promised to show himself to her in material form, through the mediumship of Ellen, the servant. Mrs. Showers was bidden to leave the room whilst the materialisation was being prepared;

"As I turned from the door," she writes, "the blended voices of Peter and Ada swelled out into a harmony so mournful and sublime, that the tears involuntarily started into my eyes. 'Oh, my God!' I exclaimed, clasping my hands, 'is it possible that these things are true, and that the majority of mankind are living in utter ignorance of them?' Hardly knowing where I went, I walked up and down the garden path in company with Lion, who carefully measured his pace with my own, in evident consciousness of my abstracted mood, until the now solemn and almost terrible voice of Peter called to me from above: 'Come up, but turn away your eyes at first from the aperture; stand at the further end of the room and only approach gradually, as I tell you.'

"I did as Peter directed, and soon perceived the living, animated countenance of a young man, clad in a dark, flowing mantle, standing at the aperture a few feet from me. He had a long, dark moustache, and his face was rounder and fuller, but the resemblance to Ellen was nevertheless plainly discernible. My daughter, however, assured me that Ellen was at that moment lying back insensible in her chair."

At the termination of the sitting Peter prescribed some good wine and other delicacies for the medium's supper.[1]

Shortly after the publication of Mrs. Showers' account of her daughter's mediumship at the end of 1873, the two ladies

[1] *Spiritualist*, 1874, p. 43. The two previous letters from Mrs. Showers, on which the account in the text is based, will be found in the same paper, 1873, p. 487, and 1874, p. 30.

came up to London to give séances to many representative Spiritualists. At first, indeed, the manifestations went no further than the presentation, in a mildly subdued light, at an opening between the curtains of the cabinet, of a face admitted by Spiritualists themselves to bear a strong resemblance to the face of the medium. The test commonly employed at these early séances to guard against impersonation by the medium had been devised apparently under direct spirit instruction. By the side of the medium would be placed, at the beginning of the séance, in the cabinet or curtained recess, a sufficient quantity of rope or tape for Peter's use. At a signal from within the curtain would be drawn aside, and the medium discovered apparently entranced, and straitly bound by that dexterous fiend. Some of the company would then impress their seals upon the knots, and the curtains would again be drawn.[1]

When by means of this and similar tests the honesty of the medium was held to be sufficiently vindicated, all precautions were at some of the later séances dispensed with, to permit of the "spirit" appearing in full form before the spectators. The following account of one of the earliest of these full-form manifestations is taken from a letter written by Dr. Richardson to the *Medium and Daybreak*:—[2]

"At a private séance held at Mrs. Showers's residence, March 19th, we were favoured with the appearance of the full form of the spirit calling herself 'Florence Maple.' I requested 'Peter,' the spiritual stage-manager, to allow me to employ what I had been impressed would be a good test for the readers of these notes, viz. to make a mark with chalk or charcoal on the face of the medium before entrancement. This was declined on the alleged ground that the mark might reappear on some part of the created spirit form, and he could not say which part. This I knew to accord with reported experiences, and was impossible to be denied. Being fully satisfied of the reality of former manifestations, all present decided to dispense with the tests of tying and sealing. After the usual lapse of time, occupied, as we were told, by entrancement, 'Florence' appeared holding aside the curtain. She was robed from head to foot in white; her head-dress was, as before, net or tulle; her bodice, sleeves, and skirt were of soft material, described by the ladies as resembling merino, by 'Florence' as being cashmere. She wore white pearl buttons in place, she said, of gold, which she was unable to procure. We all noticed the extreme pallor of her features, the open, staring, never-winking eyes. There was not so great a resemblance to the medium as formerly. She asked to

[1] See the accounts of these early séances given in the *Spiritualist*, 1874, pp. 11, 74, 108, etc.

[2] April 3rd, 1874.

examine our rings and jewellery, and expressed herself much gratified at being allowed to handle them. Miss Florence Cook was present, and was permitted to look into the curtained recess. She stated that she saw at the same time 'Florence' the spirit, the medium lying back in her chair, and a third form dressed in a grey jacket as a man. Her viewing the group was attended by no ill consequences either to the spirits or the mortals, and demonstrates that much of the fear on this ground is needless. The spirit 'Florence' kissed the human Florence, and shook hands with all of us. She appeared at times uneasy about the light, which was a lamp on the mantelpiece, burning dimly, and objected to being scrutinised too closely. The wonderful mediumship of Miss Showers was displayed by the disregard of usual rules: we walked about the room, and Mrs. Showers absolutely left the room and admitted the servant while 'Florence' was in full view. She evinced some little nervousness on the entrance of the servant, exclaiming, 'I do not know her.' I noted the height of 'Florence,' and found it to vary. At one time she stood six to eight inches taller (by subsequent measurement) than the medium, while at another she shrunk in proportion while under observation. I asked if she had bones. She replied, 'Yes'; and on retiring behind the curtain, we heard certain noises resembling the cracking of joints. Of course, I should have liked to have examined her anatomically, but was met with a cold refusal even when I asked her to put out her tongue and to let me feel her pulse. After a conversation extending over half an hour she asked if we were gratified, and on being assured that we were, she replied, 'Then we are repaid; God bless you all.'

"W. LINDESAY RICHARDSON, M.D.

"*March 20th*, 1874."

It will be seen that at these early form manifestations practically no precautions were taken against trickery. There was nothing, so far as can be discovered, to throw any hindrance in the way of the medium if she chose to impersonate the spirit by exhibiting a mask through the opening of the curtain, or by dressing herself up and walking about the room. Nor were there any collateral circumstances to justify belief in the genuineness of the manifestations.

That an imposture so naïve and so flagrant should have escaped detection for so long in itself requires explanation. That explanation is, no doubt, to be found in the peculiar conditions of the exhibition. The two principal performers were, as we have seen, young girls, little more than children in years, and one of them at least possessed of considerable personal attractions. The performances were given either in a private house in presence of members of the medium's own family, or in the house of some tried and trusted Spiritualist.

The spectators, carefully selected for the purpose,[1] were all present in the quality of favoured guests, and chivalry and good manners joined in imposing restraints upon the legitimate satisfaction of scientific curiosity. These restraints were not, indeed, always effectual. At a dark séance with Miss Cook one William Hipp seized the hand of the "spirit" which was sprinkling him with water, and, when a light was struck, found himself firmly grasping the hand of the medium. Miss Cook's explanation, that she had instinctively stretched her hand across the table to recover a flower which had been removed by the spirits from her dress, appears to have given satisfaction to her friends.[1]

On December 9th, 1873, a séance was held at Mr. Cook's house, amongst the persons present being the Earl and Countess of Caithness and the lady's son, the Count (afterwards Duke) de Medina Pomar. One of the invited guests was Mr. W. Volckman, invited, as he subsequently explained, after nine months' importunity, only when, in accordance with a hint received from Mr. Cook, he had presented the youthful medium with a present of jewellery.[2] Mr. Volckman, "having for forty minutes carefully observed and scrutinised the form, features, gestures, size, style, and peculiarities of utterance of the so-called spirit," and having "perceived also an occasional tiptoeing by the young lady as if to alter her stature," became convinced that the "spirit" was no ghost, but Miss Florence Cook herself. He therefore rushed forward and seized first the hand and then the waist of the white-robed figure. Two of the medium's friends at once jumped up and forcibly extricated the form from Mr. Volckman's grasp; the gas was extinguished; "Katie" retreated to the cabinet; and "after a delay of about five minutes . . . the cabinet was opened, and Miss Cook found in black dress and boots with the tape tightly round her waist as at the beginning of the séance, the knot sealed as at first with the signet ring of the Earl of Caithness." Subsequently the medium was searched, and no white drapery was found on her.[3]

The editor of the *Medium* alone blamed the conduct of those who had endeavoured to stifle investigation. But most

[1] See letter in *Echo*, Jan. 3rd, 1874, and letter by Thomas Blyton in the *Spiritualist*, Jan. 16th, 1874.

[2] Mr. Volckman's letter to the *Medium and Daybreak*, Jan. 23rd, 1874.

[3] See the *Spiritualist*, Dec., 1873, and *Medium*, Jan., 1874. Another of those present, Mr. Dunphy, in describing the struggle between the "spirit" and Mr. Volckman, writes that "the figure appeared to lose its feet and legs and to elude the grasp, making for that purpose a movement somewhat similar to that of a seal in water" (*London Society*, Feb., 1874).

Spiritualists reserved their indignation for Mr. Volckman, and were no whit shaken in their belief in the genuineness of Miss Cook's mediumship. Indirectly the Spiritualist position was, indeed, considerably strengthened, as the incident was the immediate occasion of the publication in the Spiritualist journals of three letters from Sir William Crookes, giving an account of his own experiences with the same medium.[1]

A like fate befell the next attempt at exposure. Mrs. and Miss Showers were invited on the 2nd of April, 1874, to give a materialisation sitting at the house of Serjeant Cox. Serjeant Cox had already, as he tells us, seen the "spirits" "Katie" and "Florence" moving about together in a lighted room; had seen that they could breathe, talk, perspire, and eat; and that in face, complexion, gesture, and voice they precisely resembled the two mediums who were asserted to be lying entranced behind the curtains. At the séance on April 2nd, when the form of "Florence" appeared in the aperture between the curtains, Serjeant Cox's daughter, Mrs. Edwards, opened the curtains wider; in the spirit's struggles to prevent this, the head-dress fell off, and revealed the "spirit's" head as that of Miss Showers, and still visibly attached to the body of that young lady, which was clothed in a dark silk dress. Moreover, the chair, where the medium should have been sitting, was seen to be empty. Serjeant Cox's own explanation was that the medium was entranced and unconscious of her impersonation of the spirit. This explanation does not, of course, take into account the awkward fact that Miss Showers had introduced into the cabinet, presumably in her waking state, some white drapery wherewithal to clothe the spirit form.[2] Serjeant Cox's action was not well received in Spiritualist circles.

The professional mediums, as already indicated, were not slow to follow the lead given them by the lady amateurs. At a séance held in the rooms of Messrs. Herne and Williams on April 13th, 1872, a veiled, nunlike figure was seen for a few seconds, "not very distinctly."[3] The mediums on this occasion were sitting in the circle; but at later séances a "cabinet" was constructed, and the spirit form would then come out and walk amongst the audience.

[1] See below, chap. ix.

[2] See Cox's letters in the *Medium* for May 8th and 22nd, and a letter from Mrs. Showers in the same journal for May 15th, 1874; also letter to the *Spiritualist*, May 15th, 1874; see also editorial comments in the same number, and letter from Mrs. Corner in the following week's issue.

[3] *Spiritualist*, May 15th, 1872. For another account of these early séances see *Spiritual Magazine*, 1875, p. 367.

During the years 1872–80 a large number of mediums appeared for this form of manifestation, and the columns of the Spiritualist periodicals were filled with accounts of successful materialisation séances. Amongst the leading exponents, besides those already mentioned, were Dr. Monck, W. Eglinton, Miss Lottie Fowler, the Misses Wood and Fairlamb—the official mediums of the Newcastle Society—Mrs. Petty and her sons, boys of thirteen and seventeen, Rita, Bastian and Taylor.

It would be tedious as unprofitable to consider these professional performances in detail. The procedure was in all essentials alike in every case. The medium would be placed apart from the circle in a "cabinet," the cabinet consisting sometimes of a large wooden box, like a sentry-box; sometimes of a curtained recess; sometimes of another room, communicating with that in which the circle was seated by a curtained doorway. The medium would generally be bound to his chair, the lights lowered, and the circle would then be requested to talk, sometimes to sing. Occasionally the silence would be relieved by the strains of a musical-box. After an interval of varying duration, glimpses of white drapery would be discerned, in the semi-darkness, at the opening of the curtains; and, if the conditions were favourable, one or more spirit forms, who for the most part affected turbans, or nondescript headgear, and flowing robes of various kinds, would walk amongst the audience, speak to them, and occasionally touch favoured individuals. At the end of the evening the medium would be found in deep trance, with his bonds unbroken. There is no recorded case in which medium and spirit have been seen together, by competent witnesses, under unequivocal conditions. The experiments conducted by Sir W. Crookes and the late Mr. Cromwell Varley on various mediums furnish us with the nearest approximation to proof of the separate existence of medium and spirit.

In these experiments, as will be shown later on,[1] it is possible, if not always to explain the fraud practised, at least to see where the opportunity for fraud occurred. But the ordinary Spiritualist, untrained in any kind of exact observation, could neither unravel the mystery himself nor will suffer us to unravel it now. When, for instance, Signor Rondi tells us that in a private house he spent two hours in the company of a materialised spirit, was allowed to examine and even to touch the hands and feet of the figure, and thus satisfy himself that it was a distinct entity from the

[1] See below, chap. ix.

medium, and finally felt the hands of medium and spirit simultaneously, he leaves us no doubt unconvinced, but unable from the very imperfection of the record to explain the matter.[1]

Again, to take another case recorded in the same year, the Hon. J. L. O'Sullivan describes how, through the mediumship of Firman, he had made the acquaintance of several spirits—to wit, his own mother, "the venerable and saintly Glaucus," John King, and two lovely girl spirits, Alexandrine and Nathalie; that these spirit figures would sometimes rise to the ceiling, sometimes seem almost to sink through the floor; and that occasionally four of them would be present at once, with the sleeping form of the medium still plainly visible.[2] We don't see how the things were done, but we remember that Firman had already been detected in Paris masquerading as an Indian spirit, and had left his mantle in the hands of the lady who had seized him.[3]

At the public séances for materialisation, where the restraints already referred to as withholding the sitters at a private circle from too probing an inquiry would no longer operate, charges of fraud and attempts at detection were frequent, and would, no doubt, have been yet more numerous but for the full conviction which the earlier Spiritualists had of the honesty of the mediums. For the ordinary incidents of a materialisation séance, and especially the perambulation of the spirit form amongst the company, offered opportunities for investigation against which all the precautions devised by the mediums for their own safety were frequently powerless. Probably from the outset some care was exercised in the admission of sitters; and the earlier mediums, Herne and Williams, Bastian and Taylor, the Misses Wood and Fairlamb, the Petty family, etc., preferred to work in couples. But after the darkness the safeguard chiefly relied upon, no doubt, was the holding of hands by the circle; for any breach of this condition involved the confederacy of at least two sitters, and by skilfully disposing the circle in accordance with spirit direction, the medium could nearly always prevent the contingency of two strangers or suspicious persons sitting side by side. Further, the sympathies of all those who believed, or were in any degree disposed towards belief, were enlisted on the side of law and order by continual insistence—in itself a sufficiently plausible

[1] *Spiritualist*, April 20th, 1877.
[2] *Ibid.*, April 13th and May 4th, 1877.
[3] *Procès des Spirites*, by M. Leymarie, p. 45.

warning—on the grave danger which must result to the medium's organism from any violent breach of the conditions. Thus protected by his own cunning and by a strong body-guard of volunteer defenders, the medium could, as a rule, defy the attempts of the solitary intruder to confound him. As a matter of fact, most of the earliest attempts at exposure were inconclusive, and Spiritualists had some justification for ignoring and even resenting them. Thus in August, 1874, at a séance given by Bastian and Taylor, a lady caught Bastian's arm where a spirit hand should have been. According to the account in the *Medium*, since Bastian was sitting in the circle, within arm's length, the result proved nothing.[1] Again, in the same month, at Newcastle, an outsider turned the light of a dark lantern on the circle, and claims to have seen one of the mediums hurrying back to her seat. But the evidence appears not to have been clear, and a summons for assault which the intruder brought against two members of the circle was dismissed in the local police court, on the ground that the conditions on which the would-be exposer was admitted to the séance had been violated by his action.[2] Again, at a séance at Arnheim with Bastian and Taylor, an electric lamp was suddenly introduced, and a moment's glimpse obtained of Bastian holding a guitar in his hand over the heads of the sitters. But Mr. Riko, the editor of the *Medium*, and others held that the member seen was a spirit hand in the act of dematerialising and sinking back into the medium's body.[3]

Later in the same year, 1875, Mr. St. George Stock made an heroic attempt at exposure. The mediums were Herne and young Petty. Mr. Stock had possessed his soul in patience for some time, whilst enthusiastic believers loudly professed to see both mediums and spirits together, where he could see only two white-robed forms, in stature and general appearance corresponding to the two mortals. But unfortunately Mr. Stock chose his opportunity not well. Whilst the white-robed forms were still before the curtain, and the conflict between faith and sight was most acute, he held his peace. When they had retired and the séance was about to end, moved by a momentary impulse, he turned up the gas, and discovered Herne seated in his chair and leaning forward. Mr. Stock, whatever grounds he may have had for suspecting fraud, admits his failure on this occasion to

[1] *Medium*, Aug. 14th, 1874.
[2] *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 21st Aug., 1874; *Medium*, 21st Aug., 1874; *Spiritualist*, 28th Aug., 1874.
[3] *Medium*, 15th Jan., 1875.

demonstrate it.[1] Once more, when Miss Wood was giving a séance at Blackburn, in the autumn of 1877, the materialised form was seized and found to be the medium herself. Miss Wood "protested that she was an unconscious instrument temporarily in the hands of an evil power," and the explanation appears to have been accepted.[2]

These repeated discoveries, however individually inconclusive, could not fail to produce some effect on the better-educated persons, at any rate, who took an interest in the movement. The columns of the *Spiritualist*, a weekly newspaper conducted with fairness and ability by W. H. Harrison, contain during the years 1876 and 1877 numerous editorials and other contributions dealing with the philosophy of materialisation. It was conceded by all those who took part in the discussion that the evidence for the actual presentation of a material form distinct from that of the medium left much to be desired. It was indeed suggested that such a form probably existed merely as a temporary emanation from the body of the medium, deriving its material elements wholly from that body; thus medium and spirit form were alike for the time materialised entities in a condition of unstable equilibrium, and reciprocally dependent, in such sort that when the rude hand of the sceptic seized the spirit form, the question "whether they united in the hands of the observer or in the cabinet . . . depended upon the relative proportion of energy in the two forms at the time of the seizure."[3] This ingenious theory was not allowed to pass altogether into the background, even when, with the progress of time, it became apparent that in all cases this hypothetical coalition took place in the hands of the observer, and not in the cabinet.

It was recognised by most that the duplication of form was rare. Miss Kislingbury, the Secretary of the "British National Association of Spiritualists," went so far as to state that the stricter the conditions, the rarer the genuine phenomena.[4] It was even suggested by some Spiritualists that the form seen at materialisation séances was the physical body of the medium, sometimes transfigured by spirit power into the

[1] See his letter in the *Medium* for June 25th, 1875. Mr. Stock later considered that he had received satisfactory evidence of a "speaking apparition" distinct from medium (in this case Mr. Williams). See his article in the *Spiritualist*, April 20th, 1877, and his letter in the same issue containing an apology to Herne for the part which he had played in 1875.

[2] *Spiritualist*, Sept. 28th, 1877.

[3] W. H. Harrison, in the *Spiritualist*, Dec. 29th, 1876.

[4] "When strict test conditions are imposed, even when united with harmony and good feeling, it is only in very rare instances that full-form manifestations take place."—*Spiritualist*, Dec. 22nd, 1876.

likeness of another body, sometimes in *propriâ personâ*, the medium being at the time entranced and controlled by his spirit guides. For the supposed "transformation" no evidence is offered worth consideration. But the alternative theory presented no special difficulty. It was admitted that to the spirits the extrication of the medium's body from the most cunningly devised bonds was an easy task. And there were, no doubt, many spiritual intelligences, especially those of sub-human "elementals," who would find pleasure in thus practising on the credulity of mortals. Clearly, then, the only satisfactory evidence of materialisation would be the simultaneous presentation of the "form" and the medium to the eyes of the circle; or, failing that, irrefragable proof of the presence of the medium in the cabinet at the time when the spirit form was outside. To Stainton Moses it appeared that evidence of the kind desired was afforded by certain experiments, notably those of the Comte de Bullet with Firman already referred to; to W. H. Harrison that the electrical tests employed by Mr. Varley and Sir W. Crookes amounted almost to a demonstration. But all were agreed that more evidence was required.

To the outsider the most noteworthy feature in the discussion is the implied belief on all hands in the honesty of the medium. Policy alone would no doubt have dictated such a profession of faith. But the accents are those of genuine conviction. It would seem that to Spiritualists at that time the idea of systematic and wholesale imposture on the part of the medium—even such unconscious or semi-conscious imposture as might be associated with a hypnoid state—had hardly presented itself as a serious possibility. If fraud there were, it was assumed to be fraud on the part of tricky elementals.[1]

[1] In an editorial article in the *Spiritualist* for 28th December, 1877, Mr. Harrison sums up the position. He begins by pointing out that there are two well-marked classes of so-called materialisations: (1) Forms with flexible features commonly bearing a strong resemblance to the medium, which move and speak. These are the forms which come out when the medium is in the cabinet. (2) Forms with features which are inflexible and masklike (the epithet is not Mr. Harrison's) and which do not move about or speak. Such inflexible faces are seen chiefly when the medium is held by the sitters, or is in full view of the circle. Mr. Harrison then continues: "We have patiently watched for years for a living, flexible face in a good light, which face bore no resemblance to that of the medium, and was not produced on his or her own premises. Hitherto this search has been prosecuted without success. Mr. A. R. Wallace and Mr. Crookes have witnessed a great number of form manifestations, without once recording that, off the premises of the medium, they have seen a living, flexible, materialised spirit form, bearing no resemblance to the sensitive. Neither has Mr. Varley made any such record."

During the year 1878 the Research Committee of the "B. N. A. S." set itself to fill up the gap in the evidence thus demonstrated. Their labours met with some apparent success. A cabinet was constructed and mounted on an apparatus made after the model of a platform weighing-machine, with an automatic recording apparatus attached.[1] Mr. Williams, the medium, sat in the cabinet, the séance-room being in complete darkness, except that a recorder was shut up in another cabinet with a lighted lamp, in such wise that no ray from it should relieve the gloom in which the spectators sat. Under these circumstances a spirit form was seen, heard, and felt to move about the room, giving on various occasions tangible proof of its presence at a distance of ten or twelve feet from the cabinet. The times of these manifestations were carefully noted, and were found to correspond with fluctuations in the weight recorded by the self-registering apparatus, the extreme limit over which the variations in weight extended amounting to about 100 lbs. When the form was at its maximum distance from the cabinet, the automatic record indicated a weight of about 30 lbs. Now since there was no heavy object which could have been placed in the cabinet during the absence of the medium, it was contended that these results indicated that part of the bodily substance of the medium had been withdrawn to make up the spirit form, whilst part remained in the cabinet, and affected the balance. The editor of the *Spiritualist* appears to have regarded the experiments as conclusive.[2]

No doubt the suggestion of a transatlantic sceptic that the medium could have manipulated the recording instrument may be dismissed as impracticable.[3] But the experiment as described was clearly open to one source of error. The medium had only to fasten the suspended cabinet to the floor by a gimlet or a piece of string and a nail, and he could move about the room as he pleased. Some fifteen months later Mr. C. C. Massey pointed out that a similar series of experiments was vitiated by the neglect to guard against this possibility.[4] That this form of fraud did not suggest itself at the time to Mr. Harrison, who was by no means lacking shrewdness or the capacity to weigh evidence, was again

[1] It is to be noted that Miss Cook—or rather "Katie"—had refused to accede Sir W. Crookes' request that she should allow herself to be weighed (see *Spiritualist*, 29th Dec., 1876, p. 257).

[2] See his articles on the experiments, *Spiritualist*, May 3rd and 17th and June 7th, 1878.

[3] *Ibid.*, June 14th, 1878. [4] *Ibid.*, 17th Oct. and 14th Nov., 1879.

due probably in a large measure to the extraordinary confidence which he and other Spiritualists seem habitually to have placed in the professional medium.

That confidence was, however, soon rudely shaken. A few months after the results of the weighing experiments, with all due scientific appurtenances of charts and diagrams, had appeared in the *Spiritualist*, Williams and his new colleague Rita were exposed in Amsterdam, under circumstances which made it difficult for the most hardened believer to lay all the blame upon the spirits. The incident took place in the rooms of a Spiritualist; the members of the circle were Spiritualists; and it was aggrieved and indignant Spiritualists who made the facts public. Suspicion had been aroused; one of the sitters clutched at the spirit form of "Charlie," and grasped Rita by the coat collar. Up to this point, no doubt, the Spiritualist theories already referred to were elastic enough to cover the facts. But when the mediums were searched, there were found, in their pockets or hidden in various parts of their clothing, on Rita a nearly new beard, six handkerchiefs, assorted, and a small round scent-bottle containing phosphorised oil, bearing a resemblance all too convincing to "Charlie's" spirit-lamp; on Williams a dirty black beard with brown silk ribbon, and several yards of very dirty muslin—the simple ingredients which represented the spiritual make-up of the repentant pirate John King—together with another bottle of phosphorised oil, a bottle of scent, and a few minor properties.

It was difficult for the believer to lay all the blame upon the spirits. But he did not shrink from the attempt; and that dirty muslin was washed in public with much circumstance. Harrison began by suggesting that evil spirits sometimes abetted their mediums in imposture, and that the facts pointed to Williams and Rita being under some strong control on the disastrous occasion.[1] Mr. Blackburn opined that the spirits—as was their wont—had brought in the muslin, etc., to save themselves the trouble of materialising it, and had, in their hurry, omitted to take it away with them.[2] Other experienced Spiritualists wrote to support this view; and Mr. Gledstanes suggested that, before concluding that his favourite medium was dishonest, it would be best to consult "John King" himself.[3]

But if the Spiritualists learnt little from the incident, the general public profited by the lesson. From this episode

[1] *Spiritualist*, Sept. 20th and 27th, 1878.
[2] Letter in *Spiritualist*, Nov. 1st, 1878. [3] *Ibid.*, Oct. 25th, 1878.

may be said to date the decline of Spiritualism in this country. Its later history is little else, indeed, than a history of similar exposures. One other example, in which the writer was personally concerned, may perhaps be quoted.

In the year 1882 there appeared in a Spiritualist journal[1] an account, by Mr. J. F. Collingwood, of a séance held under "test" conditions, with Miss Wood, a well-known Newcastle medium. Mr. Collingwood saw two distinct materialised spirit forms walking about the room, one of which—the child form of a little Indian girl called "Pocha"—touched and even kissed some of the sitters. It so happened that I had myself attended a séance with the same medium, held under the same "test" conditions, which, briefly, were as follows: Miss Wood was placed in a cupboard, the door of which had been removed and the entry secured by passing a continuous cord through eye-headed screws, placed at short intervals along the sides, top, and bottom of the doorway, the result being a kind of irregular network, with meshes whose sides varied from five to ten inches in measurement. This arrangement was designed to prevent Miss Wood from leaving the cupboard. A thick curtain was drawn across the corner of the room at an angle to the doorway, so as to leave a considerable space between the network and curtain. The lights were lowered, and after a short interval occupied by singing, two figures—a woman and "Pocha," the aforesaid little Indian girl—emerged successively from the curtain and moved about in the semi-darkness. The figures did not in my presence appear together, nor did either of them touch the sitters. After the sitting was concluded I examined the network, and found by actual trial that it was quite easy to creep in and out without injuring the meshes. I accordingly wrote to *Light*,[2] communicating my discovery, and pointing out that, when once the medium had come through the network, it would have been quite easy for her, with the aid of a little drapery, to produce all the phenomena which had been observed. The taller of the two figures, on this hypothesis, would be Miss Wood standing upright, the shorter, Miss Wood on her knees. The singing would effectually drown any noise made by the medium in creeping through the network; the presence and position of the curtain would hide her movements during the operation; whilst the more than emi-darkness would render detection difficult.

The letter was intended, not as a demonstration that fraud id been committed, but as a protest against the assumption

[1] *Light*, July 29th, 1882. [2] Aug. 19th, 1882.

that, under the given conditions, fraud was impossible. It met with a somewhat surprising reception. The next three numbers of the paper contained nine lengthy letters—selected, as the editor explained, out of a much larger number, some of them too personal for publication—from indignant Spiritualists. Not one of the writers recognised that temperate criticism of the kind employed was legitimate and even helpful. Some, indeed, disputed the possibility of the "tests" being evaded in the manner I described. But the majority thought it a sufficient answer to describe similar phenomena obtained, also "under test conditions," at other times and in other circumstances. One writer even maintained that to take any precaution against fraud was superfluous and unphilosophical. By all my action was condemned.

Then came a dramatic intervention. The last of the letters appeared in *Light* for September 9th. The following week came a communication from a Spiritualist narrating that at a séance held at his house a few days previously Miss Wood had been detected in flagrant imposture. A member of the circle had ventured to do what I had not done. He had seized the child form of "Pocha," and found himself holding Miss Wood on her knees, partially undressed, and covered with muslin, which she unsuccessfully endeavoured to conceal about her person. Again *Light* was filled with letters in defence of Miss Wood. A main feature of the defence, as before, was the description of marvellous phenomena at previous séances. Various alternative explanations of the exposure, as in the case of Williams and Rita, were suggested: that the sitters had made a mistake; that the gentleman who seized the medium had brought in the muslin himself; that Miss Wood was possessed by an evil spirit on the occasion in question; and finally, that, in accordance with Mr. Harrison's views, when the form is seized and can no longer return to the medium, the spirits, in order to secure the medium from serious injury, are obliged to bring the body to the form. They coalesce, and the inquirer who began by seizing a spirit finds that his grasp has closed upon a frame of flesh and blood. This last theory, it should be explained, was now propounded on the authority of a spirit, who had communicated it to the correspondent.[1]

So far, then, there seems no reason to doubt that the so-called spirit form was in all cases that of the medium or

[1] The foregoing account of Miss Wood's exposure, and of the events which preceded it, is taken with slight verbal alterations from my earlier work, *Studies in Psychical Research.*

an accomplice, more or less successfully disguised. Nor were there any collateral circumstances tending to render this explanation doubtful. Fragments of spirit drapery—materialised, *ex hypothesi*, for the occasion—were sometimes, at the earlier séances in this country, cut off and presented to importunate admirers; but in all cases they proved to be indistinguishable from the products of earthly looms.[1] Later this theory was gradually discredited, and it was freely recognised by Spiritualists that the drapery shown on materialised forms had been borrowed for the occasion, either by the spirits or the medium "under control."

Again, as already shown, the face of the spirit form, by the testimony of Spiritualists themselves, in most cases strongly resembled the face of the medium,[2] though some believers, admitting this, yet professed to recognise substantial differences.[3] Medium and spirit were never seen together in unequivocal circumstances and by disinterested and competent witnesses;[4] under the like circumstances the "direct" voice of the spirit was never heard speaking at the same time as the medium.[5]

At the early séances in America, as already mentioned, the sitters were reported to have constantly "recognised" the spirit forms. Mr. J. W. Truesdell was present at some of the sittings given by Mrs. Anderson in Moravia, and has described some of the "recognitions" of which he was a witness. Thus Mr. T. R. Hazard (a well-known Spiritualist) was greeted by a figure purporting to be his mother. Mr. Hazard could not see the features of the figure, and could not recognise the voice; but he had no doubt that it really was his mother, founding his conviction on his recognition of the Quaker cap and bonnet which the figure wore. This Quaker cap and bonnet, Mr. Truesdell tells us, had already done duty in a similar capacity for several other witnesses with equal success.[6]

[1] See, for instance, *Spiritualist*, Sept. 15th, 1872, letter from E. Gunton; May 1st, 1874, editorial article; *Spiritual Magazine*, Dec., 1872, p. 549, etc., etc.

[2] See, in addition to the references already cited, the editorial in *Spiritualist*, May 10th, 1874, and the account, pp. 153–4, below, of the materialised form of "Katie" photographed by Sir W. Crookes.

[3] See *e.g.* Mr. Tapp's letter in the *Spiritualist*, Feb. 6th, 1874.

[4] See the discussion on this point with respect to Sir W. Crookes' experiments with Miss Cook, below, pp. 153–5. Mr. Stock's testimony (*Spiritualist*, April 20th, 1877) does not seem really pertinent. Mr. Stock saw and spoke with the form of John King, while Williams, the medium, lay on the floor at his feet. But Herne and Eglinton were both present.

[5] See, for instance, the careful historical accounts by Mr. W. H. Harrison, the editor, in the *Spiritualist* for Feb. 6th and May 1st, 1874, etc., etc.

[6] *Bottom Facts concerning Spiritualism*, p. 83, etc. New York, 1883.

Of the famous recognitions at the Eddy séances we have various accounts, to correct the too imaginative history given by Colonel Olcott.[1] Thus Mr. C. C. Massey, a witness who was certainly not prejudiced against the Spiritualist position, attended the Eddy séances for a fortnight in 1875. This is how he describes the nightly incident of the apparition of a deceased relative of someone present:—

"A dusky young man would look out, and we had to say in turn, all round the circle, 'Is it for me?' When the right person was reached, three taps would be given, and the fortunate possessor of the ghost would gaze doubtfully, upon which the ghost would look grieved, and that generally softened the heart of the observer, and brought about a recognition in the remark, 'Lor, so you be ——.' And that sort of thing went on night after night at the Eddys'."[2]

At the early séances in this country the faces which appeared were occasionally, if rarely, recognised by the sitters as those of deceased relatives. Thus, at a sitting held on April 20th, 1872, Mr. Clifford Smith recognised one of the spirit faces as that of a lady to whom he had been engaged. The illumination, however, is described as "dim," and Mr. Smith, to judge from his own version of the incident, appears to have been in a state of much emotional excitement. Moreover, the "recognition" did not take place until after the spirit form had addressed Mr. Smith by name and claimed acquaintance.[3] At a séance with Mrs. Holmes as medium a face appeared which was recognised by Dr. and Mrs. Speer and the latter's brother as that of a departed relative. "M.A. Oxon" (Stainton Moses), who also contributes an account of the séance, states that the light was good, and that the face appeared at a few feet from the sitters. But the details given are not sufficient to enable us to judge of the value of the "recognition."[4] Again, Serjeant Cox, at a séance in January, 1873, it is stated, asked of a spirit face, "Are you my uncle, Robert Cox?" and the face bowed an affirmative.[5] But as Serjeant Cox himself does not refer to the incident, and later repeatedly expressed his entire disbelief in materialised spirit forms, it may be presumed that the recognition was premature. Later, such recognitions were reported not infrequently.[6] I have myself within the last

[1] *People from the Other World*, by H. S. Olcott. Hartford (Conn.), 1875.
[2] *Spiritualist*, Dec. 29th, 1876; see also D. D. Home, *Lights and Shadows of Spiritualism*, pp. 260–4.
[3] *Spiritualist*, May 15th, 1872.
[4] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1873, p. 80.
[5] *Ibid.*, 1873, p. 81.
[6] *e.g.* Mr. J. L. O'Sullivan's recognition of his mother at Firman's séances already referred to; Mr. Coleman's account of a lady recognising her husband

twenty years received accounts of several such incidents from persons of unquestioned good faith, who believed themselves actually to have seen the features of some dead friend. In all cases, however, the light was dim,[1] and the observers appear to have been in some emotional stress.

In short, there can be no doubt that in most cases the attendants at these dark séances see what they wish to see. Dr. Horace Furness has given a most instructive account of his experiences at materialisation séances in America, from which I quote the following:—

"At another séance a woman, a visitor, led from the cabinet to me a materialised spirit, whom she introduced to me as 'her daughter, her dear, darling daughter,' while nothing could be clearer to me than the features of the medium in every line and lineament. Again and again men have led round the circle the materialised spirits of their wives, and introduced them to each visitor in turn; fathers have taken round their daughters, and I have seen widows sob in the arms of their dead husbands. Testimony such as this staggers me. Have I been smitten with colour-blindness? Before me, as far as I can detect, stands the very medium herself, in shape, size, form, and feature true to a line; and yet, one after another, honest men and women at my side, within ten minutes of each other, assert that she is the absolute counterpart of their nearest and dearest friend, nay, that she *is* that friend. It is as incomprehensible to me as the assertion that the heavens are green and the leaves of the trees deep-blue. Can it be that the faculty of observation and comparison is rare, and that our features are really vague and misty to our best friends? or is it that the medium exercises some mesmeric influence on her visitors, who are thus made to accept the faces which she wills them to see? or is it, after all, only the dim light and a fresh illustration of *la nuit tous les chats sont gris*?"[2]

We shall have occasion to return to the subject of recognition in the next chapter, and again in Book IV. chapter iv.

(*Spiritualist*, 14th July, 1876); Mr. Ronald's recognition of his brother (*Spiritualist*, April 20th, 1877, letter by St. George Stock), etc. Remarkable accounts have recently appeared in *Light* (April, 1900, and later dates) of séances with Husk, at which several spirit faces have been shown against the background of a luminous slate, and in each case recognised by one or other of those present.

[1] "The recognisable faces of deceased persons seem to be formed with more difficulty, and in all cases to bear less light than the faces in affinity to the medium. . . . The recognisable faces have less life in them, and but few of them can talk." (W. H. Harrison, in *Spiritualist*, Feb. 1st, 1873.)

[2] *Seybert Report*, p. 150. The bodies of drowned persons are not seldom erroneously recognised. For a striking instance see Le Bon, *Psychologie des Foules*, p. 34.

CHAPTER VII

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS

THE history of spirit photography, though, in this country at any rate, extremely brief, presents several features of interest. Like most other types of manifestation, it originated in America. So early as October, 1862, Dr. Gardner, of Boston, announced that a photographer of that city named Mumler had, in taking a photograph of himself, obtained on the same plate the likeness of a cousin dead some twelve years before. In the course of the next few weeks many well-known Spiritualists flocked to Mumler's studio and obtained "spirit photographs," some of which were recognised as being the likenesses of deceased friends. In February of the following year, however, Dr. Gardner discovered that, in two at least of the so-called spirit photographs, a living person had sat for the "spirit." Dr. Gardner himself and most other Spiritualists appear still to have been satisfied that some of the photographs were genuine, basing their conviction on the double ground that many of the spirit figures had been recognised, and that in some cases the process of production had been supervised throughout by expert witnesses without trickery being detected.

But the exposure put a stop to the trade for the time, and we hear no more of Mumler until 1869, when he reappeared in New York. Within a few weeks of his commencing operations in that city a prosecution was instituted against him by the municipal authorities. The prosecution, however, was unable—the old Boston evidence being barred—to bring forward any actual proof of fraud; whilst for the defence numerous witnesses appeared, some themselves photographers who had investigated and failed to detect trickery, others, sitters who had obtained on the plate portraits of deceased relatives. In the event Mumler was discharged for want of evidence.[1]

[1] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1862, p. 562; 1863, pp. 36, 82, 128, 182; 1869, pp. 226, 241.

It is not until 1872, however, that we find any record of spirit photography in this country. The manifestation originated about the same time as the materialisations dealt with in the last chapter, and through the same instrumentality —that of Mr. and Mrs. Guppy. After trial in the domestic circle for some weeks without success, Mr. Guppy found a photographer named Hudson who, with the assistance of Mrs. Guppy or some other medium, was able to produce spirit pictures. The procedure was much the same as that followed by Mumler. The sitter would be posed in front of the camera, and, if the operation were successful, the developed picture would present, in addition to his own image, another figure, in most cases draped, and with the features blurred or only partly discernible.

Hudson's studio was at once besieged by eager Spiritualists, and numerous testimonies to the genuineness of the results appeared in the Spiritualist papers. Mr. Slater, an optician, took his own camera, lenses, and plates, and watched the process throughout, without discovering any suspicious circumstance. Moreover, though most of the spirit faces were more or less veiled in white drapery, a considerable proportion were unhesitatingly recognised by the sitters as the likenesses of friends. But very shortly the bright prospect clouded. Mr. Enmore Jones, a well-known Spiritualist, who had in his first enthusiasm described the instant recognition by his son of an imperfectly discernible profile as that of a dead sister, wrote later to say that he had found grounds for suspicion, and that on further inspection he was satisfied that the likeness was not that of his daughter or of any member of his family. And worse was to follow. The editor of the *Spiritualist*, W. H. Harrison, himself a practical photographer, another Spiritualist photographer, Beattie, and other persons soon ascertained that fraud had been used. It was observed, on a close scrutiny of the pictures, that in some cases the medium had dressed up to play the part of ghost. In many there were signs of double exposure, the pattern of the carpet and other parts of the background showing through the legs of the sitter, as well as through those of the ghost. Inspection of the actual negatives again revealed that in some cases they had been tampered with in the attempt to erase these tell-tale marks.[1]

[1] The *Spiritualist*, April, May, June, July, 1872. Hudson's photographs are now difficult to obtain; but I have examined a few specimens—the property of Mr. Dawson Rogers and the Spiritual Alliance—two of which bear clear marks of double exposure, the background in each case being visible through the dress of the sitter.

But the demonstration produced little effect. The *Spiritualist* newspaper, indeed, ceased to pay any more attention to Hudson's spirit photography; but its contemporaries, the *Spiritual Magazine*, *Human Nature*, and the *Medium*, gladly opened their columns to fresh testimonies and heated vindications. The explanation of the curious duplication of the pattern of the carpet and other marks of double exposure which found most favour with believers was of a sufficiently ingenious kind. The spirits explained that these suspicious appearances were due to refraction; the spirit aura, the presence of which was essential to the success of the experiment, differing apparently in density and refracting power from the ordinary terrestrial atmosphere.[1] Hudson's studio was more thronged than ever, and Stainton Moses, in reviewing two years later the evidence for spirit photography, bases his case largely on Hudson's work, and does not think it necessary to dwell on his detected frauds.[2]

The conviction entertained by most Spiritualists of the authenticity, in general, of these spirit photographs, a conviction shared, as we have seen in the case of Mumler, even by some who admitted that fraud had been occasionally practised, rested ultimately upon the fact that many of the spirit figures were claimed by the sitters as recognisable likenesses of their friends. How untrustworthy such recognition may be is made evident in many cases out of the mouths of the witnesses themselves. Enmore Jones repudiated the recognition of his dead daughter as soon as he became aware of suspicious circumstances in the production of the photograph. A well-known Spiritualist, Mrs. Fitzgerald, professed to recognise "unmistakably," by the contour alone, a veiled and draped figure.[3] A sceptical clergyman is reported by Stainton Moses to have recognised two faces which were so close together on the plate that "although the features were quite different, three eyes only were required to form two perfect faces."[4] Stainton Moses himself selects, out of a hundred and eighty photographs by Hudson submitted to him, two—presumably not the least impressive—to be reproduced as illustrations to the articles referred to. Copies of these two photographs are before me as I write. One of the two represents an upright figure with the whole of the bust enveloped in white drapery, so as entirely to conceal the form.

[1] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1872, p. 482; *Human Nature*, 1872, p. 448.
[2] See a series of articles by "M.A., Oxon.," published in *Human Nature*, for 1874 and 1875. [3] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1872, p. 321.
[4] *Human Nature*, 1874, p. 429.

The head presents a three-quarter face, with strongly marked prominent features. The upper part of the head is concealed by a dark covering which may be a skull-cap, coming low down on the brow; the white drapery referred to encroaches just so far on the cheek and chin as to leave it uncertain whether there were whiskers or beard. The figure was "recognised" as that of the sitter's father, an old gentleman in a skull-cap. It is undoubtedly a favourable specimen of the spirit photographer's art. But, as will be seen from the description, so little of the face is exposed to view that any identification must be of a very doubtful character. The same sitter subsequently "recognised" a portrait of a dead sister "by the manner in which she wore her hair as a child."[1] But the other photograph selected for representation is still less convincing. There are two spirits on the plate, a closely veiled (apparently) female figure, with its back half turned towards the spectator, and a baby enhaloed in copious white drapery. Moses, himself one of the sitters, claims that both figures were recognised, the mother, whose face is invisible, by her glove, the child by its features. Presumably when the photograph was new—my own copy has faded with time—the baby's features may have presented something more distinctive than a smooth superficies punctuated by two black dots. But as the baby, *ex hypothesi*, had died fifty years before at the age of seven months, the validity of this particular recognition must even so appear questionable.

But fresh evidence was soon forthcoming of the real significance of recognition in spirit photography. In the summer of 1874 a Parisian photographer, one Buguet, had come to London and produced spirit pictures. These pictures were of much higher artistic quality than those proceeding from Hudson's studio; the spirit faces were in most cases clearly defined, and were, in fact, frequently recognised by the sitters, and even W. H. Harrison failed to detect any trickery in the operation.[2]

Many of the recognised figures were, indeed, those of well-known personages. Thus, Allan Kardec appeared on the plate when his widow was the sitter; the same spirit also appeared with Miss Anna Blackwell, his best-known English disciple. Miss Blackwell was also favoured by the presence

[1] *Human Nature*, 1874, p. 395.

[2] *Spiritualist*, June, 1874, quoted in *Human Nature*, 1875, p. 14. Harrison watched the operation throughout, but was not allowed himself to operate, and for the identification of the glass plate he relied upon a small fragment of glass *broken off by Buguet*. I suspect that, as in the case of Duguid already referred to (pp. 86–7, above), Buguet found here an opportunity for substitution.

of Charles Dickens and of King Charles' head. Mr. Gledstanes obtained a portrait of the recently deceased Judge Edmonds. Prominent Spiritualists like Lady Caithness, her son, the Duke de Medina Pomar, and the Comte de Bullet, obtained portraits of near relatives. Instances of this kind do not in themselves afford any presumption of supernormal power. Nor, again, is it difficult to account, on the hypothesis of trickery, for the appearance of the well-known features of Stainton Moses himself on the sensitised plate in Buguet's studio in Paris, when the original was, as he tells us, lying in his bed in London in a state of deep trance.[1] It is much more remarkable to find that comparatively obscure persons, of whom it is unlikely that Buguet could have heard, should again and again have obtained recognisable portraits of their dead friends. Out of a hundred and twenty photographs by Buguet dealt with by Stainton Moses, evidence was forthcoming of recognition, or of the operation being produced under test conditions, in as many as forty, a far higher proportion than was the case with Hudson or Parkes.

Stainton Moses' endorsement of Buguet's claims appeared in *Human Nature* for May, 1875. In the following month Buguet was arrested and charged by the French Government with the fraudulent manufacture of spirit photographs. When put on his trial Buguet made a full confession. The whole of his "spirit" photographs were, he stated, produced by means of double exposure. In the first instance he employed his assistants—of whom there were three or four—to play the part of ghost. Later, as his business grew, and he feared that the constant repetition of the same features might arouse suspicion, he constructed a headless doll or lay figure, which, variously draped, served for the body of the ghost. The head was commonly chosen to suit the expectations, where these were expressed, or apparent circumstances of the sitter; information on these points being frequently extracted by the assistants, who received the visitors on their entrance. The lay figure and a large stock of heads were seized by the police at the studio.[2]

The peculiar interest of the trial did not consist, however,

[1] *Human Nature*, 1875, p. 97.

[2] A verbatim account of the trial will be found in a book, *Procès des Spirites*, published in Paris in 1875 by Madame Leymarie. M. Leymarie, editor of the *Revue spirite*, who had admittedly suggested to Buguet that he should endeavour to produce spirit photographs like those of Mumler, was put on his trial with Buguet, and was in the event condemned, notwithstanding his protestations of innocence, to a like punishment, viz. a year's imprisonment and a fine of 500 francs.

in these paltry revelations; for, after all, Buguet did little to improve on the methods inaugurated by his predecessors. It is the effect produced on his dupes by Buguet's confession, and the display of his trick apparatus, which is really worthy of attention. Witness after witness—journalist, photographic expert, musician, merchant, man of letters, optician, ex-professor of history, colonel of artillery, etc., etc.—came forward to testify on behalf of the accused. Some had watched the process throughout, and were satisfied that trickery had not been practised. Many had obtained on the plate unmistakable portraits of those dear to them, and found it impossible to relinquish their faith. One after another these witnesses were confronted with Buguet, and heard him explain how the trick had been done. One after another they left the witness-box, protesting that they could not doubt the evidence of their own eyes. Here, chosen almost at random from many similar accounts, is the testimony of M. Dessenon, picture-seller, aged fifty-five. After describing how he had obtained in the first instance various figures which he could not recognise, he continues:—

"The portrait of my wife, which I had specially asked for, is so like her that when I showed it to one of my relatives he exclaimed, 'It's my cousin.'

"*The Court.* Was that chance, Buguet?

Buguet. Yes, pure chance. I had no photograph of Mme. Dessenon.

The Witness. My children, like myself, thought the likeness perfect. When I showed them the picture, they cried, 'It's mamma.' A very fortunate chance! . . . I am convinced it was my wife.

The Court. You see this doll and all the rest of the things?

The Witness. There is nothing there in the least like the photograph which I obtained.

The Court. You may stand down."[1]

Incidentally there were two or three curious bits of evidence on the value of recognition as a test. A police officer stated that Buguet showed him a portrait which had done duty as the sister of one sitter, the mother of a second, and the friend of a third.[2] Again, it came out in the evidence that a very clearly defined head (reproduced as an illustration to Moses' articles in *Human Nature*), which had been claimed by M. Leymarie as the portrait of his almost lifelong friend, M. Poiret, was recognised by another witness as an excellent likeness of his father-in-law, still living at Dreux,

[1] *Procès des Spirites*, p. 33. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

and much annoyed at his premature introduction to the spirit world.[1]

The effect of the exposure on English Spiritualists appears to have been much the same as the effect on Buguet's actual dupes. Stainton Moses remarked that the prosecution bore traces of clerical origin, that the judge was strongly biassed, and that Buguet was obviously a genuine medium, who had no doubt been bribed or terrorised to make a spurious confession, and to fabricate a box full of trick apparatus for exhibition at the trial.[2] William Howitt saw in the whole proceedings further evidence of an organised conspiracy on the part of the Jesuits to overthrow Spiritualism. They had in this instance, he pointed out, apparently bribed a genuine medium to confess to imaginary trickery, as a few years before they had sent one of their own emissaries, Allan Kardec, to poison the pure wells of the new truth with the pestilential doctrine of reincarnation.[3]

However, the result of the trial was undoubtedly on the whole to discourage the profession of spirit photography, and we hear little more of it in this country after 1875.

Of other alleged instances of spirit photography at this time, one only deserves serious notice.[4] Mr. Beattie, a practical photographer, who had already, on the strength of the signs of double exposure, denounced Hudson's spurious pictures, in the years 1874–5 carried on with a few friends a series of experiments at Bristol. The results, after many blank séances, were the production of a number of plates exhibiting curious blotches and splashes of light, a few bearing a remote resemblance to the human figure, but the majority being shapeless and unrecognisable. Judged from the reproductions which I have seen,[5] the effects might well be due to rays of light being admitted through a small aperture on to the sensitised plate in the developing room.[6] The experiments took place in the studio of a

[1] *Procès des Spirites*, p. 42; see also *Human Nature*, 1875, frontispiece. The spirit head in the photograph is noticeably flat, thus testifying to its origin.

[2] *Human Nature*, 1875, pp. 334, 335. [3] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1875, p. 346.

[4] I omit any account of Parkes' pictures, partly because he would not apparently allow his processes to be thoroughly supervised, partly because so very few of his spirit photographs were even claimed as recognised. See the article by Mrs. Sidgwick, *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. vii., and Stainton Moses' articles in *Human Nature*.

[5] Some of these photographs are reproduced in Aksakof's *Animismus und Spiritismus*, vol. i. Leipzig, 1890.

[6] Or the blotches might be due to the use of a strong developer; or conceivably they might have been produced by smearing the negative with some reagent —*e.g.* a soluble sulphide—which would blacken it. From the reproductions referred to it is not clear that the white blotches have any spatial relation to the

professional photographer named Josty, who supplied also the apparatus used, and who received payment for his services. Josty further acted as medium and assistant in the necessary operations. From the evidence published by Mrs. Sidgwick, it is clear that Josty's character was not such as to make trickery on his part a very improbable explanation.[1]

The profession of spirit photography has languished in this country since 1875.[2] From time to time within the last five-and-twenty years, however, reputed spirit photographs have been obtained by private persons without the aid of a professional medium or photographer. Most of those which I have seen represent mere vague fogs or splotches of light, and were no doubt caused by the inadvertent admission of light to the sensitised plate, whether through incapacity on the part of the operator or some undetected defect in the apparatus. In a case which was brought to my notice lately the supposed ghost was apparently to be attributed to an accidental double exposure; there were faint marks of double exposure in the print.

A very curious ghost photograph attained some celebrity ten years ago. A lady, on the 5th December, 1891, took a photograph of the library of D—— Hall. Six months later she developed the plate and found seated in a large armchair the faint but clearly discernible figure of a man. Various friends recognised the image as the likeness of the late Lord D——, the owner of D—— Hall, and it was ascertained that Lord D—— had actually been buried on the day the photograph was taken. Professor Barrett, however, who investigated the case, showed (1) that the image is too faint and blurred for any likeness to be substantiated; (2) that the plate had been exposed in the camera for an hour and the room left unguarded; (3) that actual experiments show that an appearance such as that on the plate could have been

figures of the sitters, *i.e.* the blotches may have been produced before the plate was put into the camera.

[1] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. vii. p. 286, on "Spirit Photography": a reply to Dr. A. R. Wallace, by Mrs. Henry Sidgwick. Mrs. Sidgwick's article, to which I have been much indebted in the preparation of this chapter, furnishes a trenchant analysis of the chief evidence for spirit photography, and should be referred to by all interested in the subject.

[2] Boursnell is the professional who has attained most celebrity in Spiritualist circles of recent years. I am not aware, however, of any evidence entitling his productions to serious consideration. Some of his photographs which I have seen bear unmistakable marks of double exposure—the pattern of the floorcloth and the drop-curtain of the studio being visible through the sitter's legs, etc. One of Boursnell's spirit pictures represents a well-known statesman, in which the head has apparently, as in Buguet's productions, been cut from a photograph, the contour being heavily draped to hide the sharp edges of the card.

produced if a man—there were four men in the house—had sat in the chair for a few seconds during the exposure, moving his head and limbs the while. There seems no reason to doubt that in fact the picture was so produced, though it is now impossible to verify this hypothesis.[1] A ghost picture, which was probably caused in a similar way, was shown me lately. The operator had been photographing a chapel. On developing the plate he observed in a panel of the woodwork a faintly discernible face, in which he recognised the features of a young acquaintance who had recently met with a tragic death. In fact, when he told me the story and showed me the picture, I could easily see the faint but well-marked features of a handsome, melancholy lad of eighteen. A colleague, however, to whom I showed the photograph without relating the story, at once identified the face as that of a woman of thirty. The outlines are in reality so indistinct as to leave ample room for the imagination to work in; and there is no reason to doubt that, as in the ghost of the library, the camera had merely preserved faint traces of some intruder who, during prolonged exposure, stood for a few seconds in front of it.[2]

[1] See the account of this case in *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xiv. p. 234, and the subsequent discussion in the *Journal S. P. R.* for February and the following months, 1900.

[2] No attempt has been made in the text to give a systematic account of the various kinds of fraud or accident which may give rise to reputed spirit photographs. Nor, indeed, does such a systematic exposition of the possibilities of deception form any part of the plan of this book. But it may be useful briefly to enumerate some of the leading methods suggested or actually shown to have been employed.

(1) A confederate may be surreptitiously introduced and stand for a few seconds behind the sitter; (2) the figure of a spirit may be painted in sulphate of quinine or other fluorescent substance on part of the background; (3) the positive may be printed from two different negatives (this last is a clumsy device, and can, of course, be guarded against by inspection of the negative at the time); (4) the negative may be twice exposed: this, as explained in the text, is the method which has been actually adopted by most spirit photographers, and, if care is taken, in taking the picture of the ghost, that only that part of the plate on which the ghost is to appear shall be exposed to the light, excellent results may be obtained; (5) in some cases, where old glass plates are used, the image of a previous photograph may remain on the glass and may reappear when the positives are printed off. The Rev. A. T. Fryer has called my attention to a case in which a faint portrait of a man was discerned in one of the panes of glass in a greenhouse. The pane had apparently come from a photographic studio (*British Journal of Photography*, April 13th, 1900).

The above are the chief methods by which a clearly defined figure, other than that of the ostensible sitter, can be introduced on to the plate. But (6) a transparency may be introduced into the camera itself, between the lens and the plate. Images like those in Mr. Beattie's photographs might conceivably have been produced in this way; (7) or the actinic light may be allowed to fall upon the plate in the dark room. I have heard of cases in which the images of raised glass letters on the side of the bath have been imprinted on the plate during the process of development.

CHAPTER VIII

CLAIRVOYANCE AND TRANCE-SPEAKING

OF the psychological manifestations of later Spiritualism there is little to be said. Prior to 1860, as already shown, trance communications and inspirational writing and drawing had played the leading part in this country in the spread of the new faith. But from that date onward the increasing prevalence of physical phenomena drew away attention from the less arresting manifestations of the trance. It was gradually realised, moreover, by the more sober-minded Spiritualists that trance manifestations of the ordinary type were in themselves of little value as evidence for any external agency. The communications were obviously in most cases coloured by the medium's mind, if they did not actually originate there. The difficulty of obtaining conclusive answers to "test" questions was considerable; and satisfactory evidence of the identity of the so-called spirit communicators was still more rarely forthcoming. Thus Mr. W. H. Harrison, writing in 1875, states that he had on two occasions only received any evidence of this kind worth consideration, and that after studying trance mediumship for some months, he had been forced to fall back on the physical manifestations for the proof which he required.[1] Dr. A. R. Wallace admits that "the purely mental phenomena are generally of no use as evidence to non-Spiritualists."[2] The only instances of such test phenomena quoted in Dr. Wallace's book as coming under his personal observation are messages spelt out by raps at séances with Mrs. Marshall.[3] For illustrations of clairvoyance he quotes accounts of Dr. Haddock's somnambule, Emma, and the performances of Adolphe and Alexis Didier.[4] And, speaking generally, in the recitals of personal experience after 1860 a small and rapidly lessening

[1] *Spirit People*, pp. 38, 39.
[2] *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, pp. 202, 203 (2nd edition, 1881).
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 129.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 60 *et seq.*

share is assigned to the subjective phenomena of the trance and automatism. The three hundred pages of evidence published in the Dialectical Society's Report include only a few brief accounts of verified spirit messages, or even of proofs of clairvoyance.[1]

Nevertheless, in the years 1860–80, and indeed up to the present time, automatic writing and speaking have been abundant in private circles; and in many cases within my own knowledge manifestations of this kind, occurring as it were spontaneously in the family circle after recent bereavement, have done much to carry conviction of intercourse with the spirit world. These communications, however, rarely contain anything of general interest, or of objective value as evidence, and the subject has probably been sufficiently considered in previous chapters.[2] There have also been numerous mediums who professed clairvoyance. Of the trance communications of Home and Stainton Moses we shall speak later. Of purely professional mediums some of the most notable were Miss Lottie Fowler, Mrs. Olive, Mr. Towns, Miss Hudson, and Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher.[3] Of all these Miss Fowler, an American by birth, enjoyed the highest reputation. I have received from various friends accounts of communications received from her which certainly, as described, appeared to point to the possession on her part of supernormal powers of obtaining information.[4] But testimony in matters of this kind is peculiarly liable to fallacy; and the investigators of the Society for Psychical Research have failed almost completely to extract any evidence for clairvoyance or thought-transference having even a *primâ facie* value from the annals of English Spiritualism prior to the last decade.

But apart from trance messages and clairvoyance of the ordinary type, there have been various series of trance communications of a more impersonal character which have

[1] See especially the evidence of Cromwell Varley, Hockley, Signor Damiani, Mrs. Honywood, and the Master of Lindsay.

[2] See especially chaps. ii. and iv. of the present book.

[3] For some illustrations of the mediumship of Miss Fowler, Mrs. Olive, and Miss Hudson, see *Where are the Dead?* by Fritz (London, 1873). Some startling accounts of test communications received through Miss Fowler are given in the Spiritualist periodicals between 1872 and 1874. In the *Spiritual Magazine* (1874, pp. 36, 187, 286) are quoted articles which appeared in the *Glasgow Daily News* in March of that year, in which the "Special Commissioner" of the paper, presumably a personal stranger to Miss Fowler, describes some remarkable pieces of intimate personal history given to himself and a friend. Hellenbach (*Eine Philosophie des gesunden Menschenverstandes*) bears witness to Miss Fowler's clairvoyance.

[4] My own solitary interview with Miss Fowler was completely unsuccessful.

been supposed by Spiritualists to exhibit supernormal knowledge. Two of the most striking of these I select for consideration. It is to be noted that each of the mediums concerned has also produced physical phenomena of a kind to imply either supernormal powers over matter, or systematic fraud.

In 1875 Mr. T. P. Barkas held a series of sittings with a trance medium, afterwards well known, chiefly for her physical phenomena, as Madame Esperance. A selection of the results was published a few years later in the *Psychological Review*,[1] and again in *Light*.[2] From Mr. Barkas' narrative we learn that the sittings were given freely. The medium, an imperfectly educated woman, would answer in the trance questions put to her by the sitter. Before Mr. Barkas' advent the questions had been of a miscellaneous character, without system or continuity, and the records had been imperfectly preserved. Mr. Barkas conceived the idea of putting a series of questions in various branches of physical science, and received answers of a very surprising kind. The answers were generally relevant to the question, occasionally correct, and in any event revealed a copious and bewildering technical vocabulary. Mr. Barkas claimed that in view of the limited education of the medium, and the circumstances under which the answers were given, the scientific knowledge displayed must have emanated from a supernormal source—presumably from the spirits of the dead *savants* who professed to speak through the human organism.

On a superficial examination the results are certainly difficult to explain. But if we read Mr. Barkas' narrative closely we shall note (1) that the medium had due notice of the subject on which she was to be questioned: "I was gratified," writes Mr. Barkas, "when I proposed to the control to take up questions in physical science, to find," etc.[3] (2) Mr. Barkas has published not all the answers received, but only a small selection, presumably not those least calculated to support his argument. (3) Again, it is quite clear that the few answers published have been edited, though to what precise extent does not appear. If we compare the answers, for instance, given on page 228 of the *Psychological Review* with the version of the same answers given in *Light* (February 21st and March 14th, 1885), we shall find numerous and not always unimportant discrepancies. (4) Lastly, though many of the answers as selected and edited are substantially

[1] Oct., 1878. [2] Feb., March, April, etc., 1885.
[3] *Psychological Review*, vol. i. p. 219.

correct, others are not merely erroneous, but contain errors which would be impossible for anyone with a rudimentary understanding of the subject.

Thus, at a séance held on August 16th, 1875, Mr. Barkas asked the following question:—

"In making reed organ pipes there are single notes that cannot be made to speak correctly without having a small hole bored in what is termed the 'boot' of the pipe. Why is this?"

The answer is given: *Because in organ pipes the sound is made to, or I mean the air is made to vibrate, by issuing from a small slit and striking on a sharp cutting edge. This should be done in every case. I don't know why in reed organs alone, since it would be an advantage in every case.*[1]

The answer would have some relevance only if the question had referred to the action of the mouthpiece of the pipe.[2] Again, at the séance of November 15th, 1875, which was devoted to questions on heat, the medium is asked:—

"What is radiant heat?"

The answer runs: *Heat given off from an invisible source: heat from a dark object.*

To appreciate the full significance of this answer it should be understood that in the text-books the definition of radiant heat is commonly followed by the statement that heat may be radiated from dark as well as from luminous bodies.

Or take this question: "Has glass or rock salt the greater dispersive power for heat?"

Answer: *Glass being almost athermanous does not disperse the heat, but rock salt is the most diathermanous, and transmits all, or nearly all, luminous and obscure rays.*[3]

Again the answer shows a failure to comprehend the question. The conjunction of glass and rock salt no doubt suggested to the medium an answer which would have been relevant, though only partially correct, if the question asked had been different.

In a dissertation on the structure of the ear we read of "a series of filaments known as otolithes";[4] and later on we get an amazing classification of all chemical compounds under ten heads, viz. *acids, oxides, anhydrates, hydrates, chlorates, chlorides, sulphides, sulphates, carbonates, nitrates.*[5]

[1] *Light*, 14th March, 1885.

[2] For an analysis of the medium's mistakes in acoustics see an article by Professor Mathews, in the *Journal of the S. P. R.* for November, 1885.

[3] *Psychological Review*, Oct., 1878, p. 232.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 233.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 239

I imagine a fairly intelligent schoolboy, if he had known beforehand the subject of his *vivâ voce* examination, and had been able, as Madame Esperance apparently was, to suggest or modify the questions, or when hard pressed to refuse an answer, above all, if his answers had been selected and touched up by a sympathetic examiner,—such a schoolboy, I imagine, if he could have been induced to cram at all, would have had better results to show for his cramming.[1]

A more interesting because, apparently, a more spontaneous case, is that of David Duguid, the Glasgow painting medium, some of whose performances have been already described.[2] Duguid, a working cabinet-maker by trade, was over thirty when, in 1865, he first joined a Spiritualist circle. He soon developed the power of painting pictures in the trance, with his eyes apparently fast closed. Mr. H. Nisbet, the Glasgow publisher, at whose house the circle was held, has written a biographical notice of the medium,[3] from which we learn that Duguid took no fee for his séances, and that strangers were, for some years at any rate, admitted freely to witness the paintings in progress. No experiments appear to have been made to test the genuineness of the trance, nor, indeed, is there any test which can be relied upon in such cases, though certain persons display in the trance symptoms (*e.g.* insensibility of the conjunctiva) which cannot readily be feigned.

From Dr. William Anderson, who witnessed the performance in 1866, and who had himself no doubt that the medium was really entranced, we have a fairly accurate description of what took place.[4] For the convenience of the spectator, the easel was usually placed in the full light of the gas. The medium, apparently in deep trance, and with his eyes apparently closed, would paint rapidly and effectively, the subjects being for the most part landscapes, lakes, waterfalls, etc. On one occasion, when the light was reduced to a feeble glimmer and a screen held between that glimmer and the canvas, the medium in Dr. Anderson's presence went on working at the picture, introducing, during the almost complete darkness, several small boats on the surface of a lake.

[1] The Spiritualist paper *Light* in 1890 contained several letters signed "Edina" giving accounts of trance communications, purporting to come from different spirits through the organism of the writer's daughter, a young woman of twenty-three. The result of a careful analysis of these trance communications will be found in the *Journal of the S. P. R.* for July, 1891. The analysis showed that, in every case which could conveniently be tested, the information given was either incorrect, or was such as could be obtained from books or other readily accessible sources.

[2] See above, pp. 86–7.

[3] See the Introduction to *Hafed, Prince of Persia.* Glasgow, H. Nisbet, 1876.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

On the whole, the description given is consistent with the supposition that Duguid was really entranced, but that he used his normal eyesight, in the same manner as the entranced "clairvoyants" who figured before the second French Commission;[1] or it is permissible to suppose that the extraordinary sense of space relation exhibited in certain abnormal states may have helped the manifestations.[2] It is not until we come to the "direct spirit paintings" executed in darkness, as already described, that we are confronted with the alternative of preconcerted fraud or occult faculty.

For similar reasons I am disposed to regard Duguid's trance utterances as probably not involving conscious deception. The spirit artists who inspired his earlier trances purported, as already said, to be Ruysdael and Steen. In August, 1869, however, there appeared a new control, Hafed, a prince of Persia in the early days of the Christian era, and the interest of his revelations eclipsed even the marvel of the spirit paintings. Throughout a hundred sittings, extending over some years, the spirit of Hafed delivered himself of a series of discourses, dealing with his own experiences on earth and with the wonders of the spirit spheres. Of princely birth, Hafed had been summoned at an early age to take command of his country's armies in an expedition against a host of ruthless Arab invaders. He had fought and been victorious, had loved, married, and lost his wife. He was admitted to the order of the Magi, and ultimately chosen Archmagus. He was thus enabled to furnish the Glasgow circle with detailed descriptions of the creeds and social life of ancient Persia, Tyre, Greece, Egypt, Judæa, Babylon, and many other long-perished civilisations which the Archmagus visited in his travels. Incidentally he corrects the history and chronology of Moses, and many false conceptions current among the learned concerning the ancient world. But all this is introductory to the climax of his life. His guardian spirit summoned Hafed and two brother Magi to go to Judæa and take with them rich gifts to greet the birth

[1] See above, vol. i. p. 74, and pp. 141–5.

[2] The best-known example of this singular faculty, which almost seems occasionally to usurp the sense of sight, is that of the soldier wounded in the Franco-Prussian War, who could fill a whole sheet of paper with writing, and then, without the use of his eyesight, go back over what he had written, dotting the i's and making erasures and amendments. The case was described by Huxley (following Mesnet) in his article on "Human Automatism." Other instances of the faculty are given by Braid, Carpenter (*Mental Physiology*, edition of 1876, p. 143), W. James (*Proc. Am. S. P. R.*, p. 554). I have myself seen one doubtful instance of it. It is commonly explained as a special development of the muscular sense.

of a young child then cradled in a cattle shed in the city of Bethlehem. A few years later the Persian Magus travelled with the young child in Persia, India, and many other countries, listening to his young companion as he preached to the people, and wondering at the miracles performed by him.

In the end the aged Persian, after conversing with Paul in Athens, and himself preaching the gospel in Venice and Alexandria, perished in his hundredth year in the arena at Rome.

The narrative is copiously illustrated with "direct" spirit drawings, portraying such subjects as the battle-scene between the hosts of Persia and Araby; a sea-fight in the Persian Gulf; Egyptian and Indian temples; Jesus as a young man recalling to life the spirit of a dead Hindoo; and, finally, the arena at Rome, with lions and martyrs.

If the human artist was in fact entirely without education in such matters, the drawings, especially those concerned with architectural subjects, are, it must be admitted, not without merit. As regards the discourses, which were taken down verbatim by Nisbet, and afterwards revised by the entranced medium, the style is surprisingly good. It is free from the pretentious verbosity of Andrew Jackson Davis and others of the early American trance-speakers; it is grammatical throughout, and rarely degenerates into rhapsody or mere sounding verbiage. Nor, apart from the nature of the subjects treated, is there anything to cause offence in the narrative. If published apart from its accessories, it would perhaps pass muster as a historical romance, the most didactic and one of the dullest of its kind. At worst, it would probably be said that the dramatic interest of the story was not sufficient to justify the historical inaccuracies and improbabilities; and that the undoubted sincerity and high moral aim of the writer should have restrained him from too familiar handling of sacred personalities.[1]

[1] I will not attempt the task of analysing Hafed's historical and other errors. It is more interesting, for our present purpose, to note the attempts of the trance intelligence to justify or explain away discrepancies. Thus on page 89 it is stated Cyrus, when still a youth, met Zoroaster, and was instructed by him in the principles of true religion. On its being pointed out to the control that Cyrus and Zoroaster were not, according to the ordinary chronology, contemporaries, it replied that Cyrus' teacher was not the eponymous founder of a religion, but another person of the same name. Again (p. 82), Ararat is described as a mountain near the Red Sea." It was pointed out, on revision, that the mountain known as Ararat is not near the Red Sea. Hafed replied that the name was wrongly applied by modern geographers. "Such mistakes," he said, are easily accounted for in the translation of the original records from one

To recognise that the volume is in fact an historical romance, constructed by a pious and half-educated Scotchman on the basis of his studies in the Bible and various popular manuals, is not to impute conscious deception to its author. But the question of the responsibility of trance mediums for their utterances will best be dealt with in a later chapter.[1]

A book published in 1870, *Heaven opened, or Messages for the bereaved from their little ones in Glory*,[2] which excited some attention amongst believers, gives a fair idea of the kind of spirit messages received in devout circles at this time. The authoress — a sister of Mr. Morell Theobald, already referred to—concealed her identity under the initials "F. J. T." The messages, produced by automatic writing, purported for the most part to proceed from the spirits of young children, relations of the medium, and are concerned with the glories of the spirit world, described in language appropriate to young children. The imagery is apparently borrowed partly from the Bible, partly from current fairy tales.

Throughout the history of English Spiritualism, and down even to the present day, inspirational speakers have played a large part in the propaganda. One of the earliest native speakers of distinction was Mrs. Emma Hardinge, afterwards Mrs. Hardinge Britten, from whose work on American Spiritualism I have had occasion to quote in previous chapters. Mrs. Hardinge, in 1865 and onwards, delivered eloquent discourses professedly under spirit guidance, and generally on subjects chosen at the meeting by a committee from the audience.[3]

In or about 1870 Mr. Morse, still one of the best-known English trance-speakers, began his career. His eloquence is referred to in high terms by Serjeant Cox. "I have heard an uneducated barman, when in a state of trance, maintain a dialogue with a party of philosophers on 'Reason and Foreknowledge, Will and Fate,' and hold his own against them. I have put to him the most difficult questions in

language to another." Once more (p. 38), Hafed, preparing to do battle, spoke of the unsheathing of his *falcon*. It was suggested to him that perhaps "falcon" was a mistake for "falchion." But he rejected the suggestion. "The *falcon*," he said, "was a long, straight, two-edged sword, with a falcon's head on the hilt."

[1] See Book IV. chaps. vi. and vii., especially the discussion of the Reincarnation romance of "Helène Smith," the medium described by M. Th. Flournoy.

[2] London: J. Burns.

[3] See her *Extemporaneous Addresses*, First and Second Series. London, 1865 and 1866.

feat must still remain a very surprising one. That the flow of verbiage never fails is a small matter: Mrs. Tappan's trance-utterances surpass those of almost every other automatist in that there is a fairly coherent argument throughout. Two at least of the subjects set to her in 1874, "The Origin of Man" and "The Comparative Influence of Science and Morality on the Rise and Progress of Nations," may be presumed to have been little familiar.[1] But the speaker is never at a loss. In the first case, after referring briefly to the various solutions of the problem given by ancient theologies, she states the theory of evolution, and after propounding an intelligent, if not profound, criticism of it, proceeds to develop her own views of a kind of immanent Pantheism. Here is an extract from her criticism of the Darwinian theory, which gives a fair idea of her reasoning powers:—

"In fact, the weak points in the Darwinian theory are easily found out by the student of science or natural philosophy. One is, that he makes the doctrine of the theory of selection and evolution account for the existence of distinctive types. In our opinion this is most erroneous; there is no such process going on in nature; there never has been known to be such a process in nature as the one type of existence ever becoming merged into or becoming another type. There is no change going on in the lower orders that are said to resemble man by which it is possible that they may become future men. The gorilla and the ape, though resembling man in appearance, fail to resemble him in any distinctive qualities of expressed intelligence, and there has never been known in the history of the world a specific change from the lower to the higher degree of existence. Besides, that which is said to be the organic and continuous property of evolution applies not to the change and transition from one type to another of existence, but to the perfection and development of the type already formed; so that if Nature does select her types, it does not and has not been shown that she has ever confused those types, interblent them, or in any way lost them, but persistently, sacredly preserved the germs of every specific type in existence up to the present time"

* * * * * *

"But, as we stated, if we are to trace man's origin we must consider him in his complete nature, and not merely in his physical nature. It is sufficiently easy—a process of the greatest facility—to trace, with the scientific data that are in the world, the results of natural law up to the development of man—the monad, or

[1] *Discourses*, etc., Part I. p. 179, and Part II. p. 383. The volume includes some fifty long discourses, besides minor speeches in answer to questions, etc.

distinctive particle which exists by itself; the duad, which means two monads added together, makes another stage, etc., etc. These atoms in their sixfold nature, constantly changing and developing, are fully and absolutely empowered by the law of existence to develop all phases of physical life that are known. But atoms are not intelligent; monads, duads, triads are not intelligent; molecules are not intelligent. No atom or atomic structure contains within itself that which is the final source and cause of organisation; and when the physical scientist declares that he has discovered the process of creation, he omits the one power of creation that alone is capable of solving the mystery."[1]

As said, the reasoning is not profound, but it is not unintelligent; and the rhythm and fluency, no doubt, for the audience covered any gaps in the logic. If we scrutinise the style more closely, we shall find that, though a favourable specimen of its kind, it yet has the characteristic defect of the automatic utterance—a redundancy of words for words' sake. Note, for instance, the constant duplication of words without any substantial enlargement of meaning—"science or natural philosophy"; "merged into or becoming"; "change and transition"; "perfection and development"; "atom or atomic structure." There is a similar barren repetition of phrases, *e.g.* "It is sufficiently easy—a process of the greatest facility"; "atoms are not intelligent; monads are not intelligent"; and so on.

When concerned with more congenial themes, the rhythmical quality of the eloquence and its invertebrate structure are alike more conspicuous. Here, for instance, is the peroration to a discourse on "The Eternal Progress of the Human Spirit":—

"Are these the themes of your aspirations? Then what wonder if through the vistas of eternity there open, broad and wide, theme upon theme of lofty thought, of divine aspiration, of glorious work, of everlasting conquest! It is not that man shall there conquer matter, and build gold and silver temples, and the idols of material worship. It is not that the hero shall slay millions of human beings, and so gain what is called earthly fame. The paltry excuses of human ambition, the small needs of human life, the imposing objects of your being, pale and disappear before the higher themes of spiritual meditation and of eternal advancement. One by one the vistas of that divine subject open to your gaze; one by one the hosts that are marshalled in glorious array appear before your vision; one by one the ideas of eternal progress are gained, and

[1] *Op. cit.*, Part I. pp. 182, 183.

new ideas, new mountains of knowledge, present themselves for you to climb; one by one the stars in space, the planets in their orbits, and systems and constellations pass beyond you; and you go on and on through the eras of eternal life, without pause, never resting, never tiring, but with new-found companies of knowledge and wisdom cleave the air of space and visit the habitations of the most celestial beings—angels, archangels, cherubim, seraphim! Behold they dawn upon you with their wondrous powers and matchless knowledge! They sing the songs of creation! they people space with their thoughts! they give you a glimpse of their life! and on and on you go, ever with those countless myriads of hosts, marching up the steep of eternity, hand in hand, heart to heart, linked together still by the love of God and by your love for one another!"[1]

I have heard Mrs. Tappan's eloquence described as "flatulent," and I am not prepared to dispute the aptness of the epithet. A more salient characteristic is its extraordinary monotony. We are not perhaps entitled in oratorical efforts to look for the same finish that we expect in literary essays of a more considered kind. Certainly we shall look in vain throughout Mrs. Tappan's published discourses for the inevitable word, the novel simile, the polished epigram. The spirits could pour forth *ore rotundo*, but knew not the virtues of compactness. Mrs. Tappan's utterances may, as some of her contemporaries asserted, have been jewelled, but her jewels are five hundred words long, and they do not sparkle. Again, we find none of the literary artifices by which ordinary speakers are wont to give relief—there is no antithesis, no climax, no irony or humour in any form. And the dead level of style reflects a dead level of sentiment; there is no scorn or indignation, no recognition of human effort and pain, no sense of the mystery of things. The style is clear, as jelly is clear; it is the protoplasm of human speech, and it is flavoured throughout with mild, cosmic emotions.

Frequently at the close of an address Mrs. Tappan would recite an impromptu poem, again on a subject chosen at the moment by the audience. Some of these poems are strikingly melodious, and it is interesting to note how the melody continually overpowers the sense. In the first two of the stanzas which follow, for instance, quoted from a poem on "Prayer," the meaning sought to be conveyed is, it will be admitted, less conspicuous than a certain sonorous quality which, on analysis, is found to be largely mechanical:—

[1] *Op. cit.*, Part II. p. 140.

"Like the stars that sweep and burn
In their orbits of pure flame,
Where God kindled in the urn
Of their life His holy name;

"Like the suns with points like swords,
Flashing up the steep of space,
Leading armies without words,
By the light from God's own face;

"Each world filling its own sphere,
Each star keeping perfect time
To the mandate written there,
On the scrolls of heaven sublime.

"To the planets ye may turn,
As they flash and toil and shine,
For a lesson ye may learn
To employ each gift divine."[1]

Sometimes, it must be owned, the audience were rather exacting in their tests. There is an heroic attempt, for instance, at a poem on "Cremation":[2] that the poetic afflatus should have failed before this task is perhaps no matter for surprise. In another trial, hardly less severe, Mrs. Tappan has achieved some measure of success. The subject set was "The Future of England," and the result was a poem, by no means unmusical, of about a hundred lines. One stanza may perhaps be quoted:—

"What is it that upholds her but the chime
Of nations that die out when she appears?
But meanwhile here at home one voice she hears.
Wealth, power, greatness, all are hers, the sway
Of high supremacy on land and sea,
All power and purpose of true industry.
One subtle heart-drop ebbing day by day
Despoils her of her life, tears from her those who toil,
The purpose and the blood with which to stay
Her honour in some future darker day—
Bearers of burdens, tillers of her soil.
She keeps her greatness and her line of kings,
But she must lose the deep heart-murmurings
Of love; the very strings that make her strong,
The sinews and the arms of power,
Are slow escaping every day and hour,
Singing in distant lands their freedom's song."[3]

There is a curious indication here of the mechanical character of the utterance. The word "chime," meaningless in its context, is a mere echo of the word "clime," which ends the preceding stanza. The passage as a whole re-

[1] *Op. cit.*, Part I. p. 62. [2] Part I. p. 189. [3] Part II. pp. 395, 396.

presents Mrs. Tappan's eloquence at its best. But it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that the inspiration proceeds from purely mundane sources. There are, indeed, obvious reverberations in Mrs. Tappan's verse from contemporary poets—Mrs. Browning, Matthew Arnold, Swinburne, and Rossetti; though I have failed to find any actual plagiarisms.

Of other inspirational works at this time there is little to be recorded. T. L. Harris, who during the decade 1860–70 appears to have resided chiefly in this country, delivered many discourses, inferior, if at all, only to Mrs. Tappan's orations. He also published other poems—*The Great Republic; or, Poems of the Sun.*[1] Some of Harris' earlier poems had been described by William Howitt, in the course of a review in the *Spiritual Magazine*, as possessing "scarcely less than Miltonic grandeur . . . and more than Miltonic splendour."[2] A later notice in the same magazine, in reviewing *The Great Republic*, gives a juster appreciation of his work in general:—

"The charm of the metre and the clearness of the ideas, which extend to a few stanzas . . . rapidly vanish in clouds. . . . The words and stanzas go on as sonorously as ever, but we clutch in vain at the guiding clue of reason. . . . All is a phantasmagoria."[3]

In 1873 there appeared a volume by Fred Griffin, entitled *The Destiny of Man.*[4] The preface to the volume obscurely hints at some mysterious origin, and we learn that the book was openly advertised as having been written through planchette. Less melodious than the productions of Harris or Mrs. Tappan, the poems are more coherent, but unhappily quite commonplace. A few years later a young man named Veitch produced some poetry, not without merit, under the inspiration of Chatterton.[5] But of late years the stream of inspirational poetry seems to have run dry.

[1] London, 1867.
[2] 1860, p. 200.
[3] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1868, p. 73.
[4] Trübner and Co., 1873.
[5] See the Appendix to Home's *Lights and Shadows of Spiritualism*, where much of this poetry is quoted.

CHAPTER IX

SCIENCE AND SUPERSTITION

IN 1872, in describing some recent visits paid to spirit mediums, the special correspondent of the *Times* commented on the extraordinary vitality, notwithstanding frequent exposures, of the Spiritualist belief, and the hold that it had obtained on many educated minds:—[1]

"It is evident," the reviewer continues, "either that the subject is surrounded by unusual difficulties, or that in this matter scientific men have signally failed to do their duty by the public, which looks to them for its facts. We believe the latter to be the case. It may be said, and is said by some, that Spiritualism was long ago investigated, and proved to be a mass of imposture and delusion; but, as a matter of fact, this is not so, for there has never been undertaken an inquiry of that impartial, authoritative, and thorough nature which alone can decide a prejudiced controversy. . . . However absurd the phenomena and paraphernalia of Spiritualism may be, the sifting and settling of the whole matter, once and for all, would be a practical benefit, for which the age would thank our *savants* at least as much as it thanks them for recondite theories and abstract speculations, half of which are only laid up in print for the next generation to ridicule."

And again, speaking of the Dialectical Committee's Report, "if it proves nothing else, it proves that it is high time competent hands undertake the unravelling of the Gordian knot. It must be fairly and patiently unravelled, and not cut through. The slash of an Alexandrian blade has been tried often enough, and has never sufficed."

It is singular that the writer in the *Times* completely ignores a systematic investigation by a competent man of science—Mr. (now Sir William) Crookes—then proceeding, some results of which had already been placed before the public. But in his main argument he has the support not

[1] *Times*, 26th Dec., 1872.

only of Mr. Crookes himself, but of the late Professor Balfour Stewart, who had some eighteen months previously written: "We are inclined to endorse the remark of Mr. Crookes, that men of science have shown too great a disinclination to investigate the evidence and nature of these alleged facts, even when their occurrence has been asserted by competent and credible witnesses."[1]

Whether men of science were justified in their indifference —an indifference no doubt largely fostered by the belief that the craze would shortly die out of its own accord—is fair matter for debate. Certainly the results achieved by the first French Commission on Animal Magnetism offered little encouragement for interference. And, after all, most scientific workers could fairly plead that they had other tasks for which they were better adapted. But the euthanasia of superstition, which has been looked for in each succeeding decade, still delays its coming; and to this delay the ill-informed and injudicious opposition of some has contributed probably as much as the equally injudicious, if not equally ill-informed, advocacy of others. The dealings of science with Spiritualism form an instructive chapter in the history of human thought. Not the least instructive feature of the chronicle is the sharp contrast between the tone and temper of those men of science who, after examination, accepted, and of those who, with or without examination, rejected the evidence for the alleged physical phenomena. Those who held themselves justified in believing in a new physical force—for de Morgan, Crookes, and other scientific converts did not at the outset, nor in some cases at all, adopt the Spiritualist belief proper—showed in their writings a modesty, candour, and freedom from prepossession, which shine the more conspicuously by comparison with the blustering arrogance of some of the self-constituted champions of scientific orthodoxy. The ordinary reader, whose acquaintance with the subject was confined, for instance, on the one side, to the scholarly dissertation by de Morgan, which prefaces his wife's book, *From Matter to Spirit*—a preface which is perhaps the wisest, as it is unquestionably the wittiest utterance on the subject—and, on the other, to the unmannerly letters contributed by Tyndall to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1868, could hardly fail to be prepossessed in favour of the new views. Again, the obvious candour of Mr. Crookes' articles in the *Quarterly Journal of Science*, and their judicial tone, present a striking contrast to the inaccuracy, spiteful depreciation, under the shield of

[1] *Nature*, 27th July, 1871.

anonymity, of other men's work and grotesque self-assertion which disfigured Dr. Carpenter's criticisms.[1] The mere prospect of contact with Spiritualism seems to have exercised a deteriorating effect, alike on the mind and the manners. Even Faraday, in his letter of June, 1861, forgot his wonted modesty and courtesy; and Huxley's reply to the Dialectical Society's invitation to co-operate with them is a clumsy thrust altogether unworthy of so distinguished a gladiator.

The present chapter furnishes an outline sketch of the dealings of scientific men in this country with the alleged phenomena of Spiritualism down to 1882. Faraday's demonstration of the part played by unconscious muscular action in table-turning, referred to in chapter i. of the present book, formed the first contribution to the subject. Later, apparently in June, 1855,[2] Sir David Brewster and Lord Brougham attended two sittings with D. D. Home. This is Brewster's contemporary account of the first sitting, dated June, 1855, extracted from his private diary:—

"Last of all I went with Lord Brougham to a *séance* of the new spirit-rapper, Mr. Home, a lad of twenty, the son of a brother of the late Earl Home. . . He lives in Cox's Hotel, Jermyn Street; and Mr. Cox, who knows Lord Brougham, wished him to have a séance, and his lordship invited me to accompany him in order to assist in finding out the trick. We four sat down at a moderately-sized table, the structure of which we were invited to examine. In a short time the table shuddered, and a tremulous motion ran up all our arms; at our bidding these motions ceased and returned. The most unaccountable rappings were produced in various parts of the table; and the table actually rose from the ground when no hand was upon it. A larger table was produced, and exhibited similar movements. . . . A small hand-bell was then laid down with its mouth on the carpet; and, after lying for some time, it actually rang when nothing could have touched it. The bell was then placed on the other side, still upon the carpet, and it came over to me and placed itself in my hand. It did the same to Lord Brougham. These were the principal experiments. We could give no explanation of them, and could not conjecture how they could be produced by any kind of mechanism."[3]

In September of the same year, in consequence of an erroneous version of the incident having appeared in some

[1] See his article in the *Quarterly Review*, Oct., 1871.

[2] I cannot find that the actual date of the séance is given either by Brewster himself, or by any of the other persons who have published accounts of the incident.

[3] *The Home Life of Sir D. Brewster*, by his daughter, Mrs. Gordon, pp. 257–8. Edinburgh, 1869.

change, and that he now finds himself able to "conjecture" —at a distance of some months from the actual facts—how the things were done. It may be urged, indeed, that this change of attitude is due to the discovery of suspicious circumstances at the second séance, described in the same letter to the *Advertiser*. But no later discoveries of the kind can explain or excuse positive discrepancies between the earlier and the later account of the first sitting. In the earlier account it is expressly stated that the bell rang on the floor, when nothing could have touched it; in the later account it is stated that the bell did *not* ring; and various incidents, tending to throw suspicion or ridicule on the performance, are introduced for the first time in the later account. Suppose the positions had been reversed, and that two discrepant accounts of the same séance, the later account embellished with marvellous details which found no place in the contemporary version, had been published by some preposterous Spiritualist. Brewster would, no doubt, for our warning and edification, have pointed the obvious moral; and perhaps, if the names are changed, the moral will still serve. But the Spiritualists were denied their revenge, for Brewster's diary was only published after his death.

In 1863, as already stated, appeared Mrs. de Morgan's book, *From Matter to Spirit*, with a preface by her husband. De Morgan's confession of faith is worth quoting:—

"I am perfectly convinced that I have both seen and heard, in a manner which should make unbelief impossible, things *called* spiritual which cannot be taken by a rational being to be capable of explanation by imposture, coincidence, or mistake. So far I feel the ground firm under me. But when it comes to what is the cause of these phenomena, I find I cannot adopt any explanation which has yet been suggested. If I were bound to choose among things which I can conceive, I should say that there is some sort of action of some combination of will, intellect, and physical power, which is not that of any of the human beings present. But, thinking it very likely that the universe may contain a few agencies—say half a million—about which no man knows anything, I cannot but suspect that a small proportion of these agencies—say five thousand —may be severally competent to the production of all the phenomena, or may be quite up to the task among them. The physical explanations which I have seen are easy, but miserably insufficient: the spiritual hypothesis is sufficient, but ponderously difficult. Time and thought will decide, the second asking the first for more results of trial."[1]

[1] Pages v., vi.

desire to conceal his opinion. Whether Faraday's conclusions were justified or not, no philosopher was justified in undertaking an inquiry of which he had so ostentatiously prejudged the issue; nor could the subject of the proposed inquiry have been fairly blamed for declining a trial in which the judge had already pronounced sentence. As a matter of fact, it appears that the proposal was declined by Robert Bell, the intermediary in the matter, without even consulting Home.

The letter was of course altogether unworthy of Faraday's high character and scientific eminence, and was no doubt the outcome of a moment of transient irritation.[1] The position taken was quite indefensible. It would have been reasonable for Faraday to plead that his time was too much occupied with his proper work to undertake a task of this kind; or that he was not qualified for an investigation which confessedly led or might lead beyond the limits of the physical sciences. But to enter upon a judicial inquiry by treating the subject-matter as a *chose jugée* was surely a parody of scientific methods. Faraday either had grounds sufficient for condemning Home, or he had not. In the former case an inquiry was superfluous, and could only be mischievous; in the latter Home and his manifestations were alike entitled to strictly neutral treatment.

But if illogical, Faraday's attitude was readily intelligible. As a man of common sense, he was no doubt repelled by the follies of which he heard; as a man of fastidious honour, he was sickened by the chicanery undoubtedly practised in many cases; as a man of deeply religious feeling, he was shocked by the facile irreverence which heard celestial revelations in an entranced medium's babble. But if Faraday's error was a venial one, Tyndall, in endorsing his master's conduct and following his example after its errors had been pointed out to him, has little excuse. "Faraday," writes his disciple, "regarded the necessity even of discussing such phenomena as are ascribed to Mr. Home as a discredit, to use no stronger term, to the education of this age. Still . . . having in this spirit satisfied his own mind that these reputed spiritualistic phenomena were only worthy of the scorn or pity of all intelligent persons," he was willing to investigate them! Naturally, Tyndall's own offer to investigate "in the same spirit" was not accepted.[2]

[1] This was the view taken at the time by Mr. F. T. Palgrave (*Pall Mall Gazette*, May 16th) and the editor (*Pall Mall Gazette*, May 22nd, 1868).

[2] *Pall Mall Gazette*, May 18th, 1868.

In his *Fragments of Science for Unscientific People*,[1] Tyndall furnishes a sample of his mode of investigation. The date of the solitary séance which he describes is not given, but from another source we learn that it took place in the early sixties, at the house of Mr. Newton Crosland.[2] The séance was a failure; nothing occurred which could not have been effected by fraud or accident. Tyndall claims, however, to have checked one or two intended movements of the table; he further asserts that the medium, after boasting that she was so sensitive as to be rendered seriously ill by the mere presence of a magnet in the room, failed to detect a magnet in Tyndall's pocket, within a few inches of her person; and that some of the company attributed to spirit influence movements and sounds which were actually caused by Tyndall himself. Tyndall's account of the sitting is quite possibly correct, but we have only his own word for it, and the fact that at the time he kept his experiments and observations to himself, so as to shut out all possibility of corroborative evidence, gives an appearance of unfairness to his article which is much to be regretted. As we have already seen, even a distinguished physicist is liable, like ordinary mortals, to make serious mistakes in his report of a séance, and, as a matter of fact, Tyndall's version of the evening's performance was challenged, on publication, by his host.[3]

But even if the accuracy of the narrative is admitted, the propriety of publishing it is dubious. The séance was admittedly unsuccessful; no fraud was actually detected; and it hardly seems worth while to have written an article to prove that some Spiritualists were credulous and some mediums imaginative. But when dogs are to be beaten any stick will serve.[4]

In 1869, however, an inquiry on an extended scale was undertaken. In January of that year the London Dialectical Society appointed a committee to investigate the alleged phenomena. The committee, as ultimately constituted, consisted of some thirty odd persons, of whom the most notable were A. R. Wallace, Serjeant Cox, Charles Bradlaugh, H. G. Atkinson, Dr. James Edmunds, and several other physicians and surgeons. The committee invited the co-operation of Professor Huxley and G. H. Lewes, but both declined, the

[1] London, 1871. [2] See his *Apparitions*, p. 24. London, 1873.
[3] See Crosland's *Apparitions*.
[4] In his *Spiritualism; a narrative with a discussion* (Edinburgh, 1871), P. P. Alexander devotes an appendix of several pages to demonstrating the futility of Tyndall's arguments. But the demonstration is hardly needed.

former on the ground that "supposing the phenomena to be genuine, they do not interest me. If anybody would endow me with the faculty of listening to the chatter of old women and curates in the nearest cathedral town, I should decline the privilege, having better things to do."[1]

The committee's labours extended over eighteen months. Evidence, oral or written, was received from a large number of persons who believed the phenomena to be genuine, but the committee explain that they had "almost wholly failed to obtain evidence from those who attributed them to fraud or delusion."[2] The committee further investigated the matter experimentally by means of six sub-committees, who were at liberty to invite mediums and other persons to assist in their researches.

In the event the committee reported that the great majority of their number had themselves witnessed several phases of the phenomena without the presence of any professional medium, and that the evidence thus obtained appeared to establish, amongst other things, the occurrence of sounds and movements of heavy bodies without the use of mechanical contrivance, or the exertion of adequate muscular force. In conclusion, the committee,

"taking into consideration the high character and great intelligence of many of the witnesses to the more extraordinary facts, the extent to which their testimony is supported by the reports of the sub-committees, and the absence of any proof of imposture or delusion as regards a large portion of the phenomena; and further, having regard to the exceptional character of the phenomena, the large number of persons in every grade of society and over the whole civilised world who are more or less influenced by a belief in their supernatural origin, and to the fact that no philosophical explanation of them has yet been arrived at, deem it incumbent upon them to state their conviction that the subject is worthy of more serious and careful investigation than it has hitherto received."[3]

Unfortunately the names of the signatories to this report are not given. It would seem, however, that at least two members of the original committee, Charles Bradlaugh and Dr. Edmunds, were unable to accept the finding of their colleagues.[4] As will be seen from the names quoted, several prominent members were already committed, not indeed to the spirit hypothesis, but to a belief in the genuineness of the physical phenomena; nor does it appear that any of the

[1] *Report of the Dialectical Society*, p. 229.
[2] *Report*, p. 1. [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 6. [4] *Ibid.*, pp. 50 and 279.

committee had special qualifications for the delicate investigation which they had undertaken. Again, though reports are printed of various sub-committees, together with detailed minutes of the sittings, the names of the experimenters, and even of the members of the sub-committees, are furnished in one case only: Sub-Committee No. 5, which included Dr. Edmunds and Charles Bradlaugh, had four sittings with Home, but the phenomena witnessed were feeble and inconclusive. Moreover, there are many indications that the work of the other sub-committees was not carried on under sufficiently rigorous conditions, or with due regard to accuracy.

The following description of a sitting is extracted from the Report of Sub-Committee No. 1, the most persevering and most successful of all the sub-committees:—

"On an occasion when eleven members of your sub-committee had been sitting round one of the dining-tables above described for forty minutes, and various motions and sounds had occurred, they, by way of test, turned the backs of their chairs to the table, at about nine inches from it. They all then knelt upon their chairs, placing their arms upon the backs thereof. In this position their feet were, of course, turned away from the table, and by no possibility could be placed under it or touch the floor. The hands of each person were extended over the table at about four inches from the surface. Contact, therefore, with any part of the table could not take place without detection.

"In less than a minute the table, untouched, moved *four* times; at first about *five* inches to one side, then about *twelve* inches to the opposite side, and then, in like manner, four inches and six inches respectively.

"The hands of all present were next placed on the backs of their chairs, and about a foot from the table, which again moved, as before, *five* times, over spaces varying from four to six inches. Then all the chairs were removed twelve inches from the table, and each person knelt on his chair as before, this time, however, folding his hands behind his back, his body being thus about eighteen inches from the table, and having the back of the chair between himself and the table. The table again moved four times in various directions. In the course of this conclusive experiment, and in less than half an hour, the table thus moved, without contact or possibility of contact with any person present, thirteen times, the movements being in different directions, and some of them according to the request of various members of your sub-committee.

"The table was then carefully examined, turned upside down and taken to pieces, but nothing was discovered to account for the phenomena. The experiment was conducted throughout in the full light of gas above the table."[1]

[1] *Report*, pp. 10, 11.

The date of this experiment is not given in the Report, and in the detailed minutes of the sittings there is no experiment which precisely corresponds with that above quoted. But sitting No. 38, of December 28th, 1869, may be presumed to be the occasion referred to. If, however, we compare the account given in the minutes, and presumably written at the time, with that quoted from the Report, we find several discrepancies, of which the more important are (1) that only *eight* members are mentioned as being present; (2) that the second series is stated to have consisted of *four* movements, not five, as in the Report; (3) that the number of separate movements at the third trial is not stated; (4) that the gas is recorded to have been "turned up higher, so as to give abundance of light," after the first eight experiments, from which it may be inferred that the statement in the Report, "The experiment was conducted *throughout* in the full light of gas," requires some modification.[1]

These discrepancies are not, perhaps, in themselves serious; their real importance lies in their revealing such slovenliness in the recording as justifies us in attaching little value to the record. There is another fact which throws light on the character of the investigation and the qualifications of those who took part in it. After this, the most successful sitting of the series, only two more meetings, each unsuccessful and each attended by a smaller number of members, are recorded to have been held. What manner of investigators were these who, having just obtained a striking demonstration of the action of a new force, were content to break off their experiments without making repeated attempts to obtain at least a renewal of the demonstration, if not fresh light on the nature of the new force and the conditions of its operation!

It should be added that Serjeant Cox, in his evidence before the committee,[2] describes at length an experiment at which some remarkable movements of the table were observed. He refers to this experiment as "the most conclusive evidence myself and the scientific investigators [*sc.* apparently, the sub-committee] have yet had of motion without contact." Yet this remarkable séance, which is said to have taken place on the 3rd March, 1871, is not referred to in the Reports, or recorded in the minutes, of any of the sub-committees; another instance of the slovenliness which appears to have characterised throughout the proceedings of the committee.

[1] *Report*, pp. 390, 391. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 102, 103.

The work done by the Dialectical Society was, no doubt, of value, since it has brought together and preserved for us a large number of records of personal experiences by representative Spiritualists. For those who wish to ascertain what Spiritualists believed at this time, and what phenomena were alleged to occur, the book may be of service. But, except in the Minority Report by Dr. Edmunds, there is no trace of any critical handling of the materials, and the conclusions of the committee can carry little weight.

And yet, with the single exception of the work done by Mr. Crookes, described below, the Report of the Dialectical Society represents up till 1882 the only attempt in this country at a systematic investigation, by any man or body of men having serious pretensions to scientific qualifications, of the phenomena of Spiritualism. This statement is not intended to disparage the value of the testimony of men like Cromwell Varley, Dr. A. R. Wallace, and Lord Lindsay (the present Earl of Crawford). But none of these gentlemen have published any record of systematic investigations on scientific lines. Dr. Wallace, in his *Scientific Aspect of the Supernatural*,[1] already cited, refrains from recounting his own experiences, as not demonstrative, and contents himself with quoting the testimony of others. Mr. Varley's evidence before the Dialectical Committee has been already referred to, and an isolated experiment of his own with Miss Cook is described below. Lord Lindsay's evidence will most conveniently be considered in connection with Home's mediumship, to which it almost exclusively relates.[2]

One other name deserves mention. Dr. Carpenter claims for more than a dozen years to have taken every opportunity which offered for investigating "the higher phenomena of Spiritualism."[3] But his investigations can hardly have been exhaustive, since he expressly states that he always refused to attend a dark séance, or to investigate phenomena which took place under a table. No doubt Carpenter, following the example of Braid and Faraday, did good service in demonstrating the large part played in many "magnetic," "odylic," and minor spiritualistic phenomena by unconscious expectation and involuntary muscular action. To him we owe also not only the phrase "unconscious cerebration," but a lucid analysis of the physiological mechanism of planchette writing and other automatic manifestations. But of the physical phenomena of Spiritualism in their later developments—and

[1] London, 1866. [2] See below, Book IV. chaps. iii. and iv.
[3] *Quarterly Review*, Oct., 1871.

especially of the marvels occurring in the presence of Home—he can give no adequate account. He was content to write them down as fraudulent, without in most cases attempting, or as in the case of Crookes' experiments with Home, after attempting with conspicuous ill-success, to demonstrate how the fraud was accomplished. As already indicated, the effect of his really relevant criticism was impaired by the extraordinary egotism and malevolence which he displayed.[1]

In an article published in the *Quarterly Journal of Science* for July, 1870, Mr. Crookes announced that he had entered upon a systematic investigation of the physical phenomena of Spiritualism. In the course of the next two or three years he published in the same periodical articles setting forth some of the results of his investigations. As the experiments described in these articles related for the most part to manifestations observed in the presence of Home, they can most conveniently be discussed in a later chapter, in connection with Home's mediumship in general.[2] In the early part of 1874, however, Mr. Crookes was led into a further pronouncement on the subject of Spiritualism. At a séance with Miss Cook as medium, held in the previous December, Mr. Volckman, who had borne a prominent part on the committee of the Dialectical Society, had, as already described,[3] seized the supposed spirit form of "Katie" as she walked about the room. Mr. Volckman found himself grasping a solid and strongly reluctant wrist, and held on to it until the attacks of the spirit form, aided by the efforts of two of the sitters, compelled him to desist. Mr. Volckman then expressed the opinion that the form which he had seized was that of the medium herself masquerading as a

[1] See his articles in the *Quarterly Review* for September, 1853, and October, 1871; his lectures on *Mesmerism, Spiritualism*, etc., published in 1877; and the chapter on "Unconscious Cerebration," in his *Physiology*. In the later article in the *Quarterly* he writes of Cromwell Varley as a man "possessing considerable ...nical knowledge . . . but his scientific attainments are so cheaply estimated ... that he has never been admitted to the Royal Society." Mr. Varley had ...elected to the Fellowship some months before this statement appeared. Of ...now Sir William) Huggins he writes as "a brewer, a scientific amateur," ...g "a broad basis of general culture," and "owing his success to his ...ation with a justly distinguished professor." Mr. Huggins was *not* a ...ver; and the present generation can judge how far Carpenter's spiteful ...ciation was justified. Mr. Crookes he describes as a "specialist of the ...ists," an investigator whose ability was "purely technical," and added, ...peak advisedly when we say that (the Fellowship of the Royal Society) ...ferred on him with considerable hesitation." When this latter statement ...ught to the notice of the Council of the Royal Society, that body passed ...l resolution regretting its publication, on the double ground that it was ...ct in point of fact, and that its publication was a breach of the usages of ...ciety. [2] Book IV. chap. iii. [3] Above, page 103.

spirit. In the newspaper discussion which followed, Mr. Crookes, as one who had tested and satisfied himself of the genuineness of the materialisations exhibited in Miss Cook's presence, felt bound to intervene. In his first letter the only proof offered, beyond the assertion of his own conviction, of the independent existence of the spirit form was that, on one occasion, in the house of Mr. Luxmoore, when "Katie" was standing before him in the room, Mr. Crookes had distinctly heard from behind the curtain the sobbing and moaning habitually made by Miss Cook during such séances.[1]

The evidence, no doubt, left something to be desired, and in two later letters Mr. Crookes essayed to supply the deficiency.[2] At a séance at his own house on March 12th, 1874, "Katie," robed in white, came to the opening of the curtain and summoned him to the assistance of her medium. Mr. Crookes followed "immediately," and found Miss Cook, clad in her ordinary black velvet dress, lying across the sofa. But "Katie" had vanished, and he did not actually see the two forms together. Nor did he apparently ever succeed in seeing the *faces* of "Katie" and Miss Cook simultaneously in his own house. Later, however, he claims to have seen their forms together, in a good light. Miss Cook gave a series of sittings in May of this year (1874) at Mr. Crookes' house for the purpose of allowing "Katie" to be photographed. The sittings took place by electric light, and five cameras were at work simultaneously. Miss Cook would lie down on the floor behind a curtain with her face muffled in a shawl, and "Katie," when ready, would appear in the full light, in front of the curtain. Mr. Crookes adds:—

"I frequently drew the curtain on one side when Katie was standing near, and it was a common thing for the seven or eight of us in the laboratory to see Miss Cook and Katie at the same time, under the full blaze of the electric light. We did not on these occasions actually see the face of the medium, because of the shawl, but we saw her hands and feet; we saw her move uneasily under the influence of the intense light, and we heard her moan occasionally. I have one photograph of the two together, but Katie is seated in front of Miss Cook's head."

Even here, it will be seen, full proof is wanting. Apparently all that Mr. Crookes and his fellow-observers

[1] Letter to the *Spiritualist*, 6th Feb., 1874.

[2] *Ibid.*, April 3rd and June 5th, 1874. All three letters are included in the reprint of Mr. Crookes' articles from the *Quarterly Journal of Science*, published by James Burns, under the title, *Researches in Spiritualism*. London (no date).

actually *saw*, besides the figure of "Katie," was a bundle of clothes on the floor, with a shawl at one end, a pair of boots at the other, and something like hands attached to it. As "Katie" generally, if not invariably, appeared barefooted, the boots presented no special difficulty.

Nor do the photographs themselves—some of which, by the courtesy of Sir W. Crookes, I have lately been permitted to examine—afford more conclusive evidence. It was admitted even at the time, and by believers, that "Katie's" appearance differed widely on different occasions, and that at many séances she strongly resembled the medium. This was unquestionably the case during these photographic experiments. Side by side with the photographs of the supposed "Katie," Sir W. Crookes has placed some photographs taken about the same time, and under as nearly as may be the same conditions, of Miss Cook herself. The likeness between the two sets is unmistakable. Nor is it possible to substantiate any real difference in the features. The apparently greater breadth of the "spirit" face may well be due to the fact that, whereas Miss Cook wore hanging ringlets, "Katie's" hair is effectually concealed by the drapery, which in most cases comes down over the forehead, and falls in two thick folds on either side of the head, something like the headgear of a sphinx. Again, as Miss Cook, when photographed, wore her ordinary dress, which concealed her feet, the apparent difference in height on some occasions between herself and the spirit figure cannot be relied upon. One piece of evidence would, indeed, have been conclusive—that the ears of the spirit form should have appeared intact, for Miss Cook's ears were pierced for earrings. But the encircling drapery effectually concealed both the ears and the hair of the spirit "Katie."

But conclusive evidence of the simultaneous appearance of two figures was at length obtained. At a séance held on March 29th Mr. Crookes reports:—

"Katie . . . for nearly two hours walked about the room conversing familiarly with those present, on several occasions she took my arm when walking . . . Katie now said she thought she should be able this time to show herself and Miss Cook together. I was to turn the gas out, and then come with my phosphorus lamp into the room now used as a cabinet. This I did, having previously asked a friend who was skilful at shorthand to take down any statement I might make when in the cabinet, knowing the importance attaching to first impressions, and not wishing to leave more to memory than necessary. His notes are now before me.

"I went cautiously into the room, it being dark, and felt about for Miss Cook. I found her crouching on the floor. Kneeling down, I let air enter the lamp, and by its light I saw the young lady dressed in black velvet, as she had been in the early part of the evening, and to all appearance perfectly senseless; she did not move when I took her hand and held the light quite close to her face, but continued quietly breathing. Raising the lamp, I looked around and saw Katie standing close behind Miss Cook. She was robed in flowing white drapery as we had seen her previously during the séance. Holding one of Miss Cook's hands in mine, and still kneeling, I passed the lamp up and down so as to illuminate Katie's whole figure, and satisfy myself thoroughly that I was really looking at the veritable Katie whom I had clasped in my arms a few minutes before, and not at the phantasm of a disordered brain. She did not speak, but moved her head and smiled in recognition. Three separate times did I carefully examine Miss Cook crouching before me to be sure that the hand I held was that of a living woman, and three separate times did I turn the lamp to Katie and examine her with steadfast scrutiny until I had no doubt whatever of her objective reality."

Mr. Crookes further ascertained on this occasion that a blister on Miss Cook's neck was wanting on "Katie's," and that "Katie's" ears were not pierced for earrings.

At a later séance held on the 21st of May, Mr. Crookes was privileged to be present, behind the curtain, at the farewell meeting between Miss Cook and "Katie," and saw and heard the two figures conversing together for several minutes.

There can be no reasonable doubt that on these two occasions, at any rate, the figure of "Katie," seen, heard, and touched by Mr. Crookes and most of those present, was not that of Miss Cook masquerading as a spirit, but was a separate entity of some kind. Both séances were in fact held, by Miss Cook's special invitation, in her own home and in presence of several members of her family, and the room used as a dark cabinet was the medium's bedroom.[1]

[1] See various letters in the *Spiritualist* and the *Medium* in the early part of 1874 referring to these séances. The evidence was not apparently good enough even for convinced Spiritualists. The editor of the *Spiritualist* expressly states that the séance of the 21st May was not held under test conditions (*Spiritualist*, 10th July, 1874). Mr. J. Enmore Jones, whose acquaintance we have already made in previous chapters, and who cannot certainly be regarded as unduly exacting of evidence, thought the conditions at this final series of séances by no means satisfactory, and found fault with Mr. Crookes' conduct of the one séance at which he was present (*Medium*, May 22nd, 1874). And, finally, Serjeant Cox, who accepted most of the phenomena, drew the line at materialisation, and asked for more precise evidence of the separate appearance of medium and spirit. What he thought of Mr. Crookes' later observations may perhaps be inferred from the fact that when challenged in the columns of the

One other experiment of this period calls for mention. In March, 1874, Mr. Cromwell Varley, F.R.S., the well-known electrician, applied an ingenious electrical test to Miss Cook during one of her materialisation séances. The medium, seated in an inner room darkened for the purpose, was placed in a circuit connected with a resistance coil and a galvanometer, the two instruments being in the outer room in full view of the sitters. The movements of the galvanometer were shown by means of a light reflected from a mirror on to a large graduated scale. The free ends of the wire were soldered to sovereigns, which were fastened, one to each of the medium's arms, by means of elastic bands, some blotting-paper moistened with nitrate of ammonia being interposed between the metal and the skin in order to improve the contact. At the outset, when the blotting-paper was still quite moist, the needle showed a deviation of about two hundred and twenty divisions on the scale. But as the moisture gradually evaporated, and the resistance therefore increased, this deviation as gradually diminished, until at the end of thirty-eight minutes, when the wires were finally removed from the medium's arms, the scale showed a deviation of one hundred and forty-six divisions only. As the movement of the needle on the scale was fairly regular, broken by no such sudden and extreme fluctuations as must have ensued if the medium had removed the wires, it seems clear that the wires remained attached to her person throughout. Yet during this period the figure "Katie" came out before the expectant circle, waved her arms, shook hands with some of her friends, and wrote in their presence.

From this experiment it may legitimately be inferred that, if "Katie" was a spirit, whose apparently solid form was constructed, in accordance with the Spiritualist hypothesis, out of materials drawn from the body of the medium, the abstraction of the required materials in no way affected the electrical resistance of the organism drawn upon. So much may legitimately be inferred. But Mr. Harrison, the editor of the *Spiritualist*, in printing Mr. Varley's report,

Medium (June 5th, 1874) to point out in what respect they fell short of his demand for proof on this point, he left the letter unanswered.

It is fair to point out, on the other hand, that, as already indicated, Mr. Crookes' letters on the "Katie" appearances, written to a Spiritualist journal, were primarily intended as a vindication of the character of a young woman whom he held to have been unjustly attacked. If intended as a serious contribution to science, no doubt the conditions themselves would have been stricter, and, for the satisfaction of scientific readers, the whole circumstances of the experiments would have been fully described.

adds some comments of his own—comments which, he states, met with the approval of Mr. Varley and Mr. Crookes (who had also been present). Mr. Harrison maintains that the experiment proves that the figure seen outside the curtain could not have been that of the medium. That is not a legitimate inference from the facts stated in Mr. Varley's report. To make it so, it should have been shown, either that the wires attached to the medium were so arranged that it would have been impossible for her to leave her place without breaking the circuit, or that movements such as those made by the figure "Katie" would have involved, if "Katie" were actually Miss Cook, with the wires still attached, more violent oscillations of the needle than were actually observed. As to the first point, there is no indication in the report that the wires in any way restricted the medium's liberty of movement, at any rate, in the direction of the outer room. As to the second point, the needle oscillated, when "Katie" waved her arms, over twenty-one divisions of the scale; but the assumption made by Mr. Varley that the act of writing (during which, of course, the arms would experience no sudden or violent motion) would necessarily have involved oscillation, appears to have been purely gratuitous. There is really nothing in the record to forbid the supposition that Miss Cook left her seat and promenaded as "Katie" with the wires still attached to her arms.[1] Reading between the lines, we are forced to recognise that the confidence expressed by scientific witnesses in the genuineness of these "materialisations" is inextricably bound up with their confidence in the personal integrity of the medium, and Miss Cook's later career, at any rate, scarcely allows us to suppose that such confidence was ever well founded.[2]

A modification of the experiment was tried a year later by Mr. Crookes on another medium, Mrs. Fay. The investigators sat in Mr. Crookes' laboratory, in front of a curtain. In the library, immediately on the other side of the curtain (the exact distance is not given), the medium was seated in a chair, and two brass handles, wrapped in wet cloths, were given her to hold, the circuit being thus completed. The index of the galvanometer remained practically constant for some eight minutes, and during those eight minutes various articles, placed in the library at a considerable

[1] The *Spiritualist*, 20th March, 1874.

[2] Mrs. Corner (Miss Cook) was seized in January, 1880, when personating a spirit (see *Spiritual Notes*, Feb., 1880; *Spiritualist* for January and February of same year; and my *Studies in Psychical Research*, p. 23).

distance from the medium, are reported to have been moved, a hand was seen thrust through the curtain, a locked desk was opened, and so on. At the end of the eight minutes the index went to zero, and the medium was discovered in a fainting condition. In this form of the experiment the manifestations, if performed by the medium, would seem to have involved a movement to a considerable distance away from the battery, and if it may be assumed (for it is not expressly stated) that the length of the wires or their mode of attachment would not have permitted that, it seems clear either that the movements testified to were effected by some extra-corporeal agency, or that the medium did not really link herself with the circuit at all, but placed between the handles some connecting substance of a resistance approximately equal to that of her own body.

As Mrs. Fay, no doubt, knew of the earlier experiments with a similar apparatus, the supposition that she brought with her a small resistance coil and attached it to the handles presents no great difficulty.[1] As the circuit was actually broken before the conclusion of the experiment, everything depends upon the precautions taken at the outset to ensure that the medium's body was actually in the circuit. This is how the reporter, Mr. James Burns, the editor of the *Medium*, whose report is endorsed by Mr. Crookes himself, describes the precautions observed :—

"The library was left in darkness, except a little light from the fire. The spectators stood in a circle, round the apparatus, in the laboratory. Before the curtain in the doorway was drawn, Mrs. Fay was asked by Mr. Crookes to grasp the handles. She did so at fifteen minutes past ten o'clock. The streaks of light on the scale at once ran up from zero to two hundred and twenty-one divisions, and Mr. Crookes, assisted by Mr. Bergheim, read the amount of resistance at 5,600 B.A. units. Mr. Crookes returned for a moment to the library to see if Mrs. Fay was indeed in her proper place, and the report was satisfactory."[2]

From this account it would not appear that any precautions were taken to ensure that Mrs. Fay's hands were actually in

[1] In his *Mechanism of Man* (vol. ii. p. 446) Serjeant Cox gives an account of a similar séance with the same medium, at which Messrs. Huggins, Galton, and Crookes were present. Cox does not give the date of the séance ; but he distinctly states that the apparatus was *quite new* to the medium. If Cox's statement may be relied upon, the meeting described by him must have taken place before that described in the text, and Mrs. Fay must have come to the latter forewarned of the precise nature of the test to be imposed upon her.

[2] *Medium and Daybreak*, March 12th, 1875.

the circuit; if a resistance coil were attached to the handles, it would only have been necessary for the medium in the dim light to approach her hands close to them during Mr. Crookes' momentary inspection. To detect trickery of the kind probably practised, nothing less than a careful inspection in full light would have sufficed.

At the meeting of the British Association held at Glasgow in 1876, in the Anthropological Department, presided over by Dr. A. R. Wallace, a paper was read by Professor W. F. Barrett, F.R.S., entitled "On some Phenomena Associated with Abnormal Conditions of Mind." In this paper Professor Barrett described various experiments of his own and others tending to prove what the Mesmerists of the previous generation called "community of sensation" and "clairvoyance."[1] Professor Barrett expressed the opinion that the results arrived at were not to be entirely explained by hyperæsthesia or normal suggestion. In his own words:—

"When the subject was in the state of trance or profound hypnotism, I noticed that not only sensations, but also ideas or emotions occurring in the operator appeared to be reproduced in the subject without the intervention of any sign, or visible or audible communication. . . . In many other ways I convinced myself that the existence of a distinct idea in my own mind gave rise to some image of the idea in the subject's mind: not always a clear image, but one that could not fail to be recognised as a more or less distorted reflection of my own thought. The important point is that every care was taken to prevent any unconscious muscular action of the face, or otherwise giving any indication to the subject."

This presumed mode of communication between one individual and another, without the intervention of any known sense, Professor Barrett, arguing on electrical analogies, was inclined to suggest might be due to some form of nervous induction.

Passing on from these experiments, the reader of the paper referred briefly to the physical phenomena of Spiritualism. The more marvellous phenomena, such as levitation and the handling of red-hot coals—which, as he took occasion to point out, occurred generally in darkness or a subdued light—he was inclined to attribute to hallucination. But his own observation, he proceeded to state, tended to show that not all the minor physical phenomena, such as raps and movements of furniture, could be attributed to fraud. He had himself witnessed the raps in broad daylight, out of doors,

[1] See Book I. chaps. ix., x.

under conditions which seemed to him to make trickery impossible. Professor Barrett, in conclusion, urged the appointment of a committee of scientific men for the systematic investigation of the phenomena of Mesmerism and Spiritualism. In the discussion which followed not only Mr. Crookes and Dr. Wallace, but Lord Rayleigh and Colonel Lane Fox expressed themselves in favour of some further investigation, being convinced from their own observations that there was something to investigate.

No action was taken at that time on Professor Barrett's suggestion, a result for which the exposure a few days later by Professor Lankester of "Dr." Slade—a medium whose performances had been favourably referred to by more than one speaker in the discussion which followed the reading of the paper—was perhaps mainly responsible.

Professor Barrett, however, continued, as opportunity permitted, his investigations of the subject; and some years later, in January, 1882, a conference, as described in the next chapter, was held at his invitation in London. In the following month, as a result of this conference, the Society for Psychical Research was founded.

CHAPTER X

GENERAL SURVEY OF THE MOVEMENT

THE growth of Spiritualism in this country was by comparison gradual. We have already seen to what extremes the early devotees in America were led. The course of Spiritualism on the Continent, and more especially in France and Switzerland, though less extravagant than in America, was marked by the same unfettered speculation. In Catholic France Spiritualism naturally found itself under the ban of the Church, and hence its schools appear from the outset to have been non-Christian. Most French, and indeed ultimately, most continental Spiritualists—or "Spiritists," as they preferred to call themselves—followed the doctrine of Allan Kardec. M. Rivail, to give him his true name, had been a writer on educational subjects, and a prominent advocate of phrenology and Animal Magnetism. In 1862, or earlier, he became converted to Spiritualism, and soon received, through various clairvoyants, a full exposition of a new gospel, the leading tenet in which was the doctrine of Reincarnation. In a series of works, *Le Livre des Esprits*, *L'Evangile selon le Spiritisme*, etc., based upon these clairvoyant revelations, Allan Kardec taught the new doctrine with such success that his books sold by tens of thousands, and were translated into nearly every European language.

But not all those who believed in the phenomena were disciples of Allan Kardec. Count Agenor de Gasparin, whose experiments we shall have occasion to consider in the next book, writing from a Catholic standpoint, sought to prove that the physical manifestations were to be attributed to magnetism or some kindred force given off from the sitters. His friend Thury, professor in the Academy of Geneva, proposed for the hypothetical new mode of energy the name "ectenic" force. Du Potet, Szapary, and others of the old Animal Magnetists, appear also to have held

that the phenomena could be explained on purely physical grounds, though du Potet himself admitted that some of the manifestations required at least the agency of intelligent cosmic forces.[1]

Amongst German thinkers, neither the doctrines nor the phenomena won so ready acceptance as in France. But so early as 1861 Maximilian Perty, a doctor of philosophy and professor at the University of Berne, published a treatise describing the phenomena, and attributing them to the unconscious exercise of occult powers latent in the medium's own organism. To account for some of the mental manifestations, however, he is forced to assume the existence of planetary spirits (Geodæmon, Heliodæmon, etc.) with whom the spirit of the entranced medium may on occasion enter into communion.[2] A similar theory was propounded some years later by a more famous philosopher, Edward von Hartmann. Hartmann explained the physical phenomena as due to some force analogous to electricity or magnetism emanating from the medium's body; but held that the mental manifestations point to a transcendental origin. He suggests, in short, that in thought-transference or clairvoyance the mind of the seer is in connection with the Absolute, and through the Absolute with other individual minds.[3] Similar views, with various modifications, were advocated by other continental writers—Hellenbach, du Prel, Aksakof, d'Assier. Speaking generally, the crude views of the early American Spiritualists were transmuted and elaborated by European, and especially by German thinkers, the tendency being to bring the phenomena, as far as might be, into line with known scientific analogies by postulating new forces or new extensions of familiar forces, resident in the human organism, rather than to be content with adopting an explanation which is practically the negation of all explanations—the operations of spirits.

In this country, however, the movement was free alike from the practical extravagances which attended its beginnings in America, and for the first few years, at all events, from the speculative activity which characterised its progress on the Continent. Up till 1860, as already shown, the movement in this country was almost confined to the provinces; the only periodical which succeeded in establishing itself for more than a few months was published at Keighley: there

[1] *Traité Complet du Magnétisme Animal*, pp. 480 *et seq.* Paris, 1856.
[2] *Die Mystischen Erscheinungen der menschlichen Natur.*, etc. Leipzig, 1861.
[3] *Spiritismus*, by E. von Hartmann, English translation. London, 1885.

was no prominent centre of interest in London, nor had any publication of importance appeared, in the Metropolis or elsewhere. Towards the end of the decade 1850–60, however, a small group of literary men and others had become interested in the subject, and the *Spiritual Magazine*, which made its appearance in London in the latter year, continued until the end of 1875 to be the leading organ of English Spiritualism. The editors of the new periodical for the greater part of its career were Thomas Shorter and W. M. Wilkinson, and its chief contributor William Howitt. It was consistently conservative in tone, and held itself, as far as possible, aloof from the various reforming, humanitarian, and freethinking movements with which Spiritualism had been associated in America, and to some extent, at the outset, in this country. Under the scholarly guidance of William Howitt, the new review left Socialism, phrenology, and the marriage laws alone, and confined itself to recording the sayings and doings of mediums and the spread of the new movement in this and other countries. In its earlier years a large space was devoted to accounts of similar visitations in the past, especially in the history of the Christian Church down to the present day.

Throughout its career less stress was laid upon the physical marvels of mediumship than on the trance utterances and assumed revelations proceeding from similar sources, and on their eschatological implications. But here, again, William Howitt and his friends held different views from those generally favoured abroad, and later in this country also. By the London school the spiritual utterances were regarded as supplementing rather than as supplanting Christianity, the doctrines of Swedenborg serving to mediate between the old revelation and the new, and to unite them into one apocalyptic whole. The following passage from an article by Howitt will give a fair idea of the views held by the conductors of the *Spiritual Magazine*:—

"Spiritualism," he writes, "has taught what the soul is; what becomes of it after death; that there are purgatorial or intermediate states; where these lie; that there is progression in them; that the dead seek for our prayers and sympathies; that the Communion of Saints is real, and far more extensive and precious than was ever before conceived of; that there is no cessation of miracles or prophecy . . . it has taught us not to fear death, which is but a momentary passage to life; that God is disciplining the human race for an eventual and universal restoration; that He is beginning to teach laws of matter hitherto unnoticed by the acutest men of gases

and crucibles; and that, above all, Spiritualism teaches us the authenticity of the Scriptures now so violently attacked, and their great law of the love of God and of the neighbour; that no Christianity but the *primitive* Christianity is worth a straw; and that the dry bones of the present death-in-life churches must receive His fresh breath of life if they are ever to live again. Finally, it teaches us to live in all purity of thought and deed, knowing that not only the ever-open eye of God is constantly upon us, but those of an innumerable company of angels and devils, to whom we are as well and as openly known as to our own consciences."[1]

There can be no doubt that the moderate views of this little band of Spiritualists and the culture and literary gifts of their leader did much to further the rapid growth of the new doctrine. But for William Howitt, it is doubtful whether the movement would have secured either so early or so favourable a hearing in this country.

For some years the *Spiritual Magazine* practically held the field. But the return of Home to this country in 1859 and the invasion of American mediums during the next few years had stimulated public interest in the whole question, and especially in the physical aspect of the phenomena. Moreover, the ferment of new ideas, which had produced such striking results in America, was not without its influence in England on minds less timid or less fastidious than the conductors of the *Spiritual Magazine*. Provincial Spiritualism, which had until the close of 1859 found expression in the *Spiritual Telegraph*, remained for some years after that date inarticulate. But the ferment was working in many provincial centres, notably at Keighley and in the Yorkshire manufacturing districts, in Manchester, Nottingham, and Glasgow. In 1865 a Convention of "Progressive Spiritualists" assembled at Darlington, and in the following year at Newcastle. The Secretary of the Convention on the latter occasion was Dr. Macleod of that city. Some of the speakers at these two conventions appear to have displayed marked hostility to Christianity; and, generally, the views expressed are reported to have represented "a pale imitation of the pagan phase of American Spiritualism."[2] In 1867 the Convention met in London, with James Burns as its secretary. In this same year Burns began to issue a new monthly periodical, *Human Nature*, to serve as a mouthpiece of the popular movement. The character of the new magazine can

[1] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1865, p. 162. See also 1866, pp. 90 and 139; 1873, p. 529.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1866, p. 571.

be inferred from its sub-title, "A Monthly Journal of Zoistic Science and Intelligence, embodying Physiology, Phrenology, Psychology, Spiritualism, Philosophy, the Laws of Health, and Sociology." In later years "Popular Anthropology" was added to this comprehensive catalogue. A year or two later, so rapidly did the popular movement grow, Burns brought out a weekly paper, *The Medium and Daybreak*, absorbing in it the provincial paper, *Daybreak*, which had appeared in 1868 under the editorship of the Rev. Page Hopps.[1] *The Medium and Daybreak* for years had the largest circulation, chiefly in the provinces, of any English Spiritualist paper, and only came to an end a few months after the death of its publisher and founder in 1895. Lastly, by the irony of fate, during one or two of the latter years of its existence Burns also published the *Spiritual Magazine* in addition to his other literary ventures.

The popular movement, as represented by Burns and his publications, was frankly democratic and non-Christian. In the opening number of *Human Nature* he sneers at the *Spiritual Magazine* as being "of this world as well as of the next," and as endeavouring to preach Spiritualism "under circumstances with which it would be creditable for the priest and Levite to be connected." And throughout his career Burns fought manfully against conventions and respectabilities. He was in his own person a teetotaller, anti-tobacconist, dietetic reformer, phrenologist, and a sturdy champion with the pen and on the platform of these and many kindred movements. Whilst his enthusiasm for the social reforms which he advocated was genuine and fervent, it was impossible to doubt the sincerity of his belief in Spiritualism; but equally impossible to believe him as ignorant as he professed himself of the manifold wiles and trickeries practised by physical mediums within his doors and under his direct patronage and protection. But if, not once or twice only, his blindness to all evidence of fraud in any medium whom he had befriended may have seemed too deliberate, those who knew him best can believe that it was not altogether the hope of personal advantage or the reluctance of a sensitive egotism too deeply committed for retreat which closed his eyes. It must be admitted, too, that Burns was apt to regard and to denounce his rivals in business as renegades to the faith, and that his belief in the cause seemed inseparable

[1] Mr. Page Hopps had been converted a year or two previously. See his pamphlet, *Six Months' Experience at Home*, by "Truthseeker," published in 1867.

from his belief in himself as its champion. Again, according to the reproach of his enemies, he lived by the altar; but the living was not too luxurious, and the ministry was arduous and unremitting. I have eaten of Burns' salt—as a seasoning to Nichols's "Food of Health," or some other dietetic phantasy—and I cannot think hardly of him. With all his faults he radiated a contagious enthusiasm, and the dark little shop at 15, Southampton Row, dignified by the name of the "Spiritual Institution," remained for many years the chief meeting-place for Spiritualists in the Metropolis, and the centre of a propaganda the more active because it was troubled by no theological scruple or philosophic doubt.

It is needless to say that the columns of Burns' papers were always open, and his personal help always ready, for the spokesmen of minorities, the smaller the better, from the advocates of divided skirts to the exponents of the newest theologies. The grass-eating atheists of Ham Common, who are fabled to have slept with their toes out of window, would have found in him a sympathetic historian.[1] His taste in theology, and presumably the taste of his readers, was, it will be gathered, eclectic. Whereas Howitt and Shorter in their writings had sought for evidence of the workings of Spiritualism in the past, either amongst pagan faiths so ancient as to be respectable, or else in the history of the various Christian Churches and sects,[2] contributors to *Human Nature* and the *Medium* inquired by preference into the history of kindred movements in modern times outside the pale of the Churches. We find in those pages dissertations on the faiths of the Mormons and the Shakers; long discussions on the new reincarnation doctrine as expounded by Allan Kardec and his English disciple, Miss Anna Blackwell; reviews of the religious teachings of Andrew Jackson Davis; critical essays on serpent worship, oriental mythology and religious symbolism generally; and an *a priori* demonstration of the existence of God, by Mr. Gillespie, of Torbanehill. Much attention is also devoted to the mysteries of Buddhism. Further, as we have already seen, Burns was the publisher of *Hafed, Prince of Persia.* He also set about the reissue of the immortal *Anacalypsis* of Godfrey Higgins—an author who "will take his place in future ages with Socrates, with Plato, with Proclus."[3] It was Burns, again, who introduced

[1] Some account of this curious sect is given in *Light*, 1882, pp. 191 and 251.
[2] See Howitt's *History of the Supernatural* (London, 1863), and Shorter's *The Two Worlds.* London (no date).
[3] *Human Nature*, 1874, p. 49 (Feb.).

to an astonished world the *Book of God*, being the Apocalypse of Adam I-Oannes, a work which essayed to trace all the religions of the world to one common fount of inspiration, by demonstrating that the biblical book known as the Book of Revelation was actually the earliest divine message delivered by the man-fish O-an, and the foundation of the primitive world-religion, practised in the beginning by the twenty-four Ancients, or pre-Adamite sultans. The *Book of God*, which appears to belong to the same class of literature as Madame Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled*, was published anonymously, but is understood to have been written by the late Dr. Kenealy.

With all its extravagances, there was much that was genuinely admirable in the popular movement represented by James Burns and those who gathered round him. It was a democratic religious revival, characterised, as such movements are wont to be, by the vigour of its emotional expression, rather than by the subtlety of its dialectic. This is how a thoughtful onlooker at this time, Mr. St. George Stock, writes of it :—

"The religion of the future is in our midst already, working like potent yeast in the minds of the people. It is in our midst to-day, with signs and wonders, uprising like a swollen tide . . . To its predecessors [Spiritualism] assumes an attitude not of hostility, but of comprehension. Though new in its form, it purports to have been ever in the world. Christianity it represents, not as a finality, but as one—the greatest, indeed, as yet—of those many waves of spiritual influx which have ever been beating in upon the shores of Time from the dim expanse of the Eternal. Christianity has spent its force, and now another revelation has succeeded it—a revelation suited to the needs of the time."[1]

Again, Mr. Gerald Massey, another of the early converts, has given eloquent expression to the religious effects of the belief in communion with spirits of the dead :—

"Spiritualism will make religion infinitely more real, and translate it from the domain of belief to that of life. It has become to me, in common with many others, such a lifting of the mental horizon, and letting in of the heavens—such a transformation of faith into facts—that I can only compare life without it to sailing on board ship with hatches battened down, and being kept a prisoner, cribbed, cabined, and confined, living by the light of a candle, dark to the glory overhead, and blind to a thousand possibilities of being; and then, suddenly, on some splendid starry night allowed to go on deck

[1] *Attempts at Truth*, pp. 128, 133. London, 1882.

for the first time, to see the splendid mechanism of the starry heavens all aglow with the glory of God, to feel that vast vision glittering in the eyes, bewilderingly beautiful, and drink in new life with every breath of that wondrous liberty, which makes you dilate almost large enough in soul to fill the immensity that you see around you."[1]

As regards its tenets, what has been already said[2] of the beliefs of American Spiritualists will apply to the Spiritualist creed as represented in the *Medium and Daybreak*. The popular movement held the primitive faith in spirits of dead men and women as the agency behind the phenomena. The doctrines of Allan Kardec never obtained any real footing in England. His only prominent disciple appears to have been Miss Anna Blackwell.[3] Again, the belief in diabolism, so prominent in the early days of Spiritualism in this country, found later very few supporters.[4]

Another aspect of the movement found expression in the *Spiritualist*, a newspaper which appeared towards the end of 1869, under the editorship of W. H. Harrison, a journalist and a man of some scientific acquirements. The *Spiritualist* was avowedly intended to represent the scientific element. It essayed primarily to record the phenomena, to analyse the evidence, and discuss the explanations, and proposed to defer theological and Socialist speculations until a more convenient season. This paper, which was conducted with fairness and ability for some years, did in effect adopt a more critical standpoint than any of its predecessors or contemporaries, and did contrive to keep clear of theological controversy and irrelevant humanitarian enthusiasms. As we have already seen (chapter viii.) the editor took a prominent part in exposing the trickery practised in so-called spirit photography. The *Spiritualist* and its readers were associated with the two chief organisations formed in

[1] *Concerning Spiritualism* (1874?), pp. 77, 78. [2] Vol. i. pp. 299–303.

[3] See the essay by her contributed to the Dialectical Society's *Report*, and rious articles in *Human Nature*.

[4] For an exposition of the diabolic view see, in addition to the works quoted hapter i. of the present book, *Spiritualism, the work of Demons*, by the Rev. Jones (Liverpool, 1871); *Spirit-Rapping*, by a member of the Catholic tolic Church (London 1855?); *Popular Ideas of Immortality*, Rev. William (London, 1865); *Spiritualism fairly tried*, Rev. E. Nangle (1861). These s are merely pamphlets, and none of them possesses any intrinsic importance. also Dialectical *Report*, pp. 218, 220, and 223, evidence of Chevalier and in Friswell. It is noteworthy that T. L. Harris, in some of his writings, *Modern Spiritualism, its truths and its errors* (London, 1860) and the *Arcana of* (1867), taught that the spirits who communicated were vampires and r teachings "emanations from the hells."

the decade 1870–80 by the more educated section—the "British National Association of Spiritualists" and the "Psychological Society of Great Britain."

The British National Association held its first public meeting on April 16th, 1874, under the chairmanship of Mr. S. C. Hall. Its aims are defined in its original prospectus as the uniting of Spiritualists of all shades of opinion for mutual aid and benefit, and the promotion of systematic research in pneumatology and psychology. Whilst "cordially sympathising with the religion of Jesus Christ," the Association proposed to hold itself entirely aloof from all dogmatism, religious or philosophical. Its list of vice-presidents and council included most of the best-known names in contemporary Spiritualism, such as the Countess of Caithness, Benjamin Coleman, Thomas Everitt (husband of the medium of that name), Dr. Gully, Dr. Stanhope Speer, Mrs. Ross Church (Florence Marryat), Mrs. Makdougall Gregory (widow of the Professor), Dr. Maurice Davies, Sir C. Isham, Messrs. Jencken, Newton Crosland, Desmond Fitzgerald, George Sexton, the Secularist converted to Spiritualism and Christianity,[1] together with a list of distinguished foreigners. But there were a few prominent Spiritualists who held aloof, such as William Howitt, Acworth, and J. Enmore Jones, primarily on account of the non-Christian character of the Society. Howitt voiced his dissent in an eloquent letter in which he recounted the marvellous progress of Spiritualism, and claimed that it had conquered the world under patently divine guidance: "Spiritualism is a theocracy. By theocratic power and government it has hitherto prevailed"; and in seeking now a temporal organisation, Spiritualists were repeating the sin of the Jews when they asked for a king to reign over them.[2]

James Burns' expression of dissent was more complex in character. He descried a spirit of time-serving in some of the advertisements issued by the new organisation, which avoided the word Spiritualism; "worldlyism" in the fact that a leading supporter of the Society dated his letters from the Reform Club; and, generally, hostility to himself and the Spiritual Institution in the mere proposal to found any other organisation in this country.[3]

[1] See his *God and Immortality Viewed in the Light of Modern Spiritualism* (London, 1874), and the series of tracts called "Seed Corn," published by him in 1872, etc. [2] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1873, p. 529, etc.

[3] See the editorials in the *Medium* for 30th Jan., 27th Feb., 6th March, July, etc., 1874.

But notwithstanding some opposition, the new Association grew and flourished, and remained for some years the representative body in English Spiritualism. It established periodical lectures, discussions, and conferences; promoted séances for inquirers; and did its utmost, by means of its Research Committee, to advance the knowledge of the subject. In the last field of its labours it cannot be said to have met with conspicuous success, for it unfortunately appeared that the more stringent the tests the less striking the phenomena, until a point was reached at which, the precautions being complete, the phenomena ceased altogether.[1]

In April, 1875, was held the first meeting of the Psychological Society, with Serjeant Cox as its President and Mr. F. K. Munton as Hon. Secretary. Other prominent members were Mr. C. C. Massey, Mr. Stainton Moses ("M.A., Oxon."), Mr. Hensleigh Wedgwood, Mr. George Harris, F.S.A., and Mr. W. H. Coffin.

The aim of the Society, as set forth in the president's inaugural address, was the scientific investigation of "psychology," which term Serjeant Cox violently appropriated to designate what has since, for want of a better name, been termed psychical research. The Society, it was proposed, should proceed "first, by the collection of facts, and secondly, by discussion upon their causes and consequences."[2] It did not, in effect, proceed far in either direction. Its founder and president was a man without any real knowledge either of psychology, as commonly understood, or the physical sciences. The *Proceedings*[3] of the Society, a thin volume with reports of the papers and discussions, contain little of permanent interest, and Cox's own book, as will be seen later, derives its chief value from its reflecting with tolerable fidelity the metaphysics of the man in the street. The Psychological Society came to an end with the death of its president in November, 1879.

The real significance of the Psychological Society consists in its representing a reaction against the slovenly acquiescence of the great body of English Spiritualists in the belief in spirits of the dead as the sufficient and exclusive agencies in the production of the phenomena. That reaction had indeed begun some years before the inception of the Psychological Society; just as in the American movement there had been from the outset a small body of men who,

[1] See *e.g. Spiritualist*, 1876. pp. 248, 249; 1877, p. 182.
[2] *The Province of Psychology*, the inaugural address by Serjeant Cox. London, 1875.
[3] London, 1878.

whilst accepting the facts in general, were disposed to refer them to exclusively mundane causes. Many of the older Mesmerists took the view that the raps, the movements of furniture, and even the more elaborate manifestations of physical mediumship could be attributed to a neuro-vital or odylic force radiating from the sensitive, and directed by his unconscious will. We have seen the germ of this theory in the attempts made by Sandby and Townshend to explain the table-rapping performances in 1853.[1] And fifteen or twenty years later we find similar views expressed by others who had been prominent in the mesmeric movement of 1840–50, notably J. W. Jackson, author of *Ecstatics of Genius*,[2] and H. G. Atkinson, the co-author with Harriet Martineau of *Letters on Man's Nature and Development*.[3] Similar views were held by some adherents of the rather shallow necessitarianism which prevailed in this country in the middle decades of the century. One of the earliest exponents of the agnostic doctrine was Mr. Samuel Guppy, a gentleman who has been already referred to as having had the singular good fortune to marry in succession two remarkable physical mediums. In 1863 Mr. Guppy published *Mary Jane; or, Spiritualism chemically explained.* The greater part of the book consists of a discursive and humorous exposition of the author's views on things in general, written from a crudely materialistic standpoint. When, as he tells us, the book was almost ready for the press, he became converted, through the mediumship of his first wife, to a belief in the phenomena of Spiritualism. Reluctant to admit the existence of discarnate spirits, but forced to recognise intelligence in the manifestations presented, he whimsically named the unknown entity—which answered questions, moved tables, and drew pictures at his bidding—"Mary Jane." He conceived that "Mary Jane" was but a temporary aggregate of odylic vapours emanating from the sensitive—a person whose organism probably contained an excess of phosphorus; that this mass of odylic vapours could think, feel, and perceive, rap and move tables and chairs; that its powers of perception

[1] See above, p. 11.

[2] See his lecture before the Glasgow Association of Spiritualists, delivered on 11th May, 1868, reported in *Human Nature* and the *Spiritual Magazine* for that year.

[3] See his evidence before the Dialectical Committee (*Report*, p. 106) and his controversy with Jackson and others in *Human Nature* for 1868. Others were inclined to explain the apparent physical marvels as hallucinations produced by magnetic influence (see *Spiritualism and Animal Magnetism*, by G. G. Zerffi, Ph.D. London, 1871).

transcend those possessed by the human organism from which it proceeds, because the odylic entity possesses "electrical" powers, which enable it to see through brick walls and closed boxes; and that the high thought, philosophy, and profound knowledge revealed in the odylic responses point to the connection of the odylic fluid with "a general thought-atmosphere, as all-pervading as electricity, which possibly is in itself, or is in connection with, the principle of causation of the whole universe."[1]

Mr. Guppy was not a professed metaphysician, but merely a garrulous and entertaining old gentleman. Any want of scientific precision, however, which the reader may find in the foregoing statement of the theory was fully remedied in the more elaborate exposition some years later of similar views by Mr. Charles Bray, author of the *Philosophy of Necessity* and other works.[2] Mr. Bray begins by premising the indestructibility of all force, and its convertibility. Heat, electricity, nervous force, and "thought or mind," are all modes of energy, and are therefore indestructible in quantity, and reciprocally convertible. But our bodies are continually giving off thought rays, just as they give off heat rays. These thought emanations, it must be inferred, are not lost to the universe; and, indeed, "many facts now point to an atmosphere or reservoir of thought, the result of cerebration, into which the thought and feeling generated by the brain are continually passing."[3] With this general thought-reservoir the persons called spirit mediums may be presumed to be in communication. Through the interchange of those abundant odylic emanations, which are the special characteristic of such persons, they receive specific impressions from other minds and become clairvoyant; or, again, they take cognizance of the general ideas floating about in the thought-atmosphere, and become "inspired." It is to be noted, says the author, in proof of this suggested source, that in clairvoyant revelations, whether of Andrew Jackson Davis or of Swedenborg, the knowledge displayed "in no case exceeds the combined intellectual power of the whole human mind"[4] —a proposition which there need be no hesitation in accepting. The same theory obviously affords a sufficient explanation of the physical phenomena of Spiritualism, which Mr. Bray is inclined to accept as genuine in the main. For the thought rays, which probably began as heat or electric waves, can

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 354.
[2] See his book, *On Force, its mental and moral correlates, . . . with speculations on Spiritualism.* London, 1866. [3] *Op. cit.*, p. 79. [4] *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

without difficulty, through the mediation of the sensitive's unconscious cerebration, be converted back again into such grosser modes of energy, and so discharge in "raps" or produce any other required physical effect, even to the levitation of the human body. 'Twere pity such an admirable machinery should be left without oats to grind!

But the most ambitious statement of the "animistic" view is to be found in Serjeant Cox's book, *The Mechanism of Man*.[1] Cox, like many other educated Spiritualists at this date, whilst convinced that the phenomena exhibited, whether physical or mental, transcended the normal faculties of the medium, refused to regard them as testifying to the action of spirits of the dead. His own theory on the matter may be briefly stated as follows: The universe consists of matter and non-matter, there being nowhere any void. Matter, as we know it, is made up of molecules. Molecules are themselves aggregations of still smaller particles known as atoms; but atoms, as such, make no impression on our senses. If molecular matter were disintegrated into its constituent atoms, it would be, as far as our physical perceptions are concerned, annihilated. It seems probable that the whole of the universe, outside this little island of molecular matter, is made up of free atoms—or of atoms combined in some other form than the molecular. But what is not matter is spirit; therefore spirit is atomic, or non-molecular substance, and matter can be changed into spirit, or *vice versâ*, by a simple process of transcendental chemistry.

Now the mechanism of man is actuated by three forces or principles—Life, Mind, and Soul. Life he shares with the vegetable kingdom. Mind—which is to be strictly distinguished from Soul—is the expression of the activity of the brain. "Intelligence is not a visible and tangible entity: it is not a structure, it is only a function. Precisely as digestion is a function of the stomach, intelligence is a function of the brain."[2] But at this point Serjeant Cox claims to join issue with the materialists. They will admit nothing beyond Life and Mind. Cox is convinced of the existence of a third principle, the Soul, whose substance "is vastly

[1] London, 1876. The full title runs: *The Mechanism of Man: an answer to the question, What am I? a popular introduction to Mental Physiology and Psychology.* An earlier edition of the same work had been published under the title *What am I?* but the account given in the text of Cox's peculiar doctrines is based exclusively on the later and more fully considered work.

[2] *Op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 217. Serjeant Cox, however, elsewhere describes intelligence as the characteristic attribute of the soul, and of that alone (see *e.g.* vol. i. p. 52; vol. ii. pp. 309–11).

priate in this connection, is the only one which the English language supplies—against the crude belief in spirits of the dead as the prime agents in the phenomena. Partly because of the unsatisfactory nature of the evidence offered for materialisation, partly through the failure of all so-called tests of identity, or, again, because of the limited nature of the intelligence shown in most so-called spirit communications, and their obviously subjective character, the more critical minds had begun to question whether the spirit of the psychic himself, aided, it may be, on occasion, by non-human intelligences of various kinds, would not furnish a more probable explanation of the matter.

This scepticism was no doubt reinforced by a revolt against the narrowness of the Spiritualist horizon. The revelations of Andrew Jackson Davis and the rhetoric of Mrs. Tappan had made heaven as familiar as Yarmouth beach, and about as alluring.

This reaction was further exemplified by the foundation from 1876 onwards of various schools of mystics, either originating directly in Spiritualism, or drawing the bulk of their adherents from that source. It may be inferred, from the numerous studies of contemporary religious movements, and, in particular, of Oriental mythology and the extant beliefs of India, contained in the earlier volumes of *Human Nature*, that Spiritualists in general were dissatisfied with the singularly uninspiring creed set before them by the majority of their teachers. So that when in 1876 Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky inaugurated in New York the Theosophical Society, they found many in this country ready to hear them. The new gospel professed to expound the esoteric tradition of Buddhism. Whether its claims in this respect could be substantiated or not is, from the present standpoint, immaterial. At any rate, it opened more spacious horizons. Its main tenet was the doctrine of reincarnation; but in the pages of the chief exponent of Neo-Buddhism in this country, Mr. A. P. Sinnett,[1] the cycle of death and life appears on a much vaster scale, and is described with much greater pretensions to scientific precision than in the *Livre des Esprits*. For the continual death and re-birth which make up the little life of man—"a watch or a vision, between a sleep and a sleep"—are, according to the Theosophist, but the representations in miniature of vaster cosmic pulsations, the systole and diastole of the universe. These are the days and nights of Brahm, when the whole creation slumbers and

[1] See his *Esoteric Buddhism*. London, 1883.

wakes again to renewed activity. And through the long-drawn chain of suns and circling planets, through all the stupendous cycle of the ages, throughout the waxing and waning of all things from life to nothingness, and back again to larger life, the human soul, a spark of the Central Fire, retains its identity, and bears with it in all re-births the inevitable burden of Karma, the fate which each man by his own acts and thoughts has ordained for himself. *Quisque suos patimur manes.* The man is the thing which he has made: he reaps now a crop of which the seed was sown in another age and a distant planet, and yet sown by himself.

This is not the place to give an account of the Theosophical movement, with its counterfeit miracles and chaotic apocalypses. The curious in such matters are referred to the report by Dr. Hodgson presented to the Society for Psychical Research.[1] In the period between 1876 and 1885 many Spiritualists were carried away by the glamour of Madame Blavatsky's singular personality, and the attraction of the Asiatic mysteries. Moreover, other societies, teaching somewhat similar doctrines, were founded in England about this time. There was a British Theosophical Society, under the presidency of Dr. George Wyld,[2] which united Theosophy with Christianity. There was the Hermetic Society, whose founders were the late Dr. Anna Kingsford and Mr. Edward Maitland. The Hermetic Society was chiefly concerned with Kabbalistic, Neo-Platonic, and Alexandrine mysticism.[3] There was also, and, I believe, still is, a Christo-Theosophical Society in London.

In January, 1882, Professor W. F. Barrett summoned a conference of persons who, without necessarily endorsing the Spiritualist conclusions, were satisfied that there was a *primâ facie* case for the investigation of the physical phenomena of Spiritualism, and such apparently kindred matters as ghosts, thought-transference, clairvoyance, and the manifestations of mediumship generally. At that conference, which met in the rooms of the British National Association of Spiritualists, it was resolved to form an association for

[1] *Proceedings*, vol. iii., 1885; see also *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, by V. S. Solovyoff, translated by Dr. Walter Leaf (London, 1895), and my own *Studies in Psychical Research*, chap. vi.

[2] See his *Theosophy and the Higher Life; or, Spiritual Dynamics.* London, 1880.

[3] For an exposition of the doctrine see *The Perfect Way; or, the Finding of Christ* (London, 1882), a series of lectures delivered by Dr. Anna Kingsford in London in 1881; see also Edward Maitland's *The Soul, and how it found me.* London, 1877.

systematic inquiry into these phenomena, and the new Society was named the "Society for Psychical Research." It began its career under the presidency of the late Professor Henry Sidgwick, and its first council included, on the one hand, men like Edmund Gurney, Professor Barrett, Professor Balfour Stewart, Mr. F. W. H. Myers, Mr. Richard Hutton, who had not identified themselves with the Spiritualist movement; and, on the other, Messrs. Stainton Moses, Dawson Rogers, Morell Theobald, E. T. Bennett, Dr. George Wyld, and others who were at the same time members of the Council of the British National Association. The work of the Society from 1882 to the present time will be considered in some of its aspects in the next book. It is enough to say here that the avowed Spiritualists who joined its Council in the first instance have all since dropped off, and that, generally, the two bodies have moved on lines sufficiently distinct for the most part to prevent even the semblance of rivalry. The S.P.R. has consistently maintained its original attitude towards the subject; it has throughout endeavoured to work by scientific methods for scientific ends.

Of the public history of Spiritualism in later years there is not much which need for our purposes be recorded. As little as any other has it escaped the usual fate of small sects, internal dissension, and the clash of rival egotisms. After the storms which waited on its embarkation, indeed, the B.N.A.S. for a little time voyaged in smooth waters. The excitement of the new venture and the pressure of external events, such as the Slade prosecution and various exposures of public mediums, no doubt held the Society together. But four or five years later dissensions arose. The editor of the *Spiritualist*, W. H. Harrison, had, or fancied he had, occasion for quarrel with Stainton Moses, then and for many years the leading figure on the B.N.A.S. Council. In the middle of 1879 the quarrel became irremediable, and the advertisements of the Association with the reports of its public proceedings were transferred to a new paper, *Spiritual Notes*, which had been established in the previous year. *Spiritual Notes*, which was issued monthly, ran until the end of 1881 concurrently with the *Spiritualist*. In the same year, 1881, a new weekly, *Light*, also under the favouring auspices of the Association, was founded, and under the pressure of this competition Harrison's organ was driven from the field. *Light* has continued down to the present time the chief representative, and for some portion of this period, the only London organ of Spiritualism. It has been conducted

throughout with fairness and moderation. If in these latter days its pages furnish rather dull reading, the fault lies less with the conductors of the paper than with the uneventful career of the movement itself. There has of late years been little to record. The trance communications which interested and attracted the earlier Spiritualists have not indeed ceased, but they are no longer held of the same account. During the time of the incubation of the Theosophical and Hermetic Societies the columns of *Light* were filled with controversy and philosophical speculation. But that source of copy has also dried up. Most serious of all, there are now few phenomena, and especially very few physical phenomena to record. The Theosophical Society and the Society for Psychical Research led away many who were actually Spiritualists, or might, under other circumstances, have become so. The retirement and the subsequent death of Stainton Moses robbed the movement of one who had been its leading figure for many years. Others of the old champions have been carried off by death, and no new ones have risen to take their place. Ten years ago it seemed as if the Spiritualist movement was about to die out from sheer lack of leaders, of followers, and—most serious defect of all—of new evidence for its claims. Add to this that much of the old evidence had been seriously shattered by the investigations carried on by Mrs. H. Sidgwick, Dr. Hodgson, and other members of the S.P.R.

But within the last decade the whole aspect of the problem has changed: the Spiritualist movement has gained fresh energy, and the belief which it represents, if not more firmly established, can at any rate boast that its claims are better founded than at any previous period of its history. This result is mainly due to the prolonged and laborious investigation of Mrs. Piper's trance utterances conducted by Dr. Hodgson, the result of whose labours seems to him and others to render the hypothesis of spirit communication in this case highly probable. But a contributory cause is no doubt to be found in the séances of Eusapia Paladino, whose performances have been endorsed as genuine by several continental *savants*, including Charles Richet, Ochorowicz, Schiaparelli, and de Rochas, and are regarded favourably by more than one prominent man of science in this country. The consideration of this new evidence, of the best-known foreign experiments, and of some English items necessarily omitted from this brief historical sketch, will be the main theme of the next book.

BOOK IV

PROBLEMS OF MEDIUMSHIP

PROBLEMS OF MEDIUMSHIP

CHAPTER I

SOME FOREIGN INVESTIGATIONS

THE brief historical survey of the movement of Modern Spiritualism being now completed, it is time to address ourselves definitely to the questions which we put before us at the outset of the inquiry. Is the belief in spiritual communication justified? and, if not justified, how are its origin and persistence to be explained? The belief, as we have seen, purports to be based upon two distinct classes of facts, respectively psychological and physical. As regards the first class of evidence, our inquiries have shown that, whilst the recorded instances of trance and ecstasy may be regarded as in the main free from deliberate deception, the acceptance of them as demonstrations of spiritual agency rests largely upon a misconception. Granted that the ecstatic or hypnotic knows not what he does, and understands not what his hand indites, it does not follow that the action and the utterance are due to the promptings of an alien intelligence.

It has been shown, further, that the argument drawn from the involuntary nature of the subject's action has been reinforced by considerations of another kind. Those who have assisted at exhibitions of ecstasy, magnetic clairvoyance, or mediumistic trance, have, generation after generation, testified to the possession by the subject of supernormal powers of divining thoughts or perceiving things distant and things future. The mere existence of such a belief, descending to modern times from a nebulous past, no doubt in itself proves little. Mystical philosophers have never been at a loss for facts to justify their speculations; and in matters of this kind each man is apt to find what he seeks. Moreover, the

constant stimulus of suggestion from the spectators, aided by the greater acuteness of the senses frequently experienced in the trance, furnishes a sufficient explanation of much that at the time may well have seemed inexplicable. Nevertheless, the possible existence of new avenues of perception is not to be summarily dismissed. Some evidence has already been adduced which, partly from the intellectual distinction of the witnesses—Bertrand, Elliotson, Braid, de Morgan—partly from the excellence of the record, as in the case of Cahagnet, seems even now worthy of consideration. An estimate of the value of this evidence, augmented in recent times by the researches of the S.P.R., and a brief statement of the conclusions to which it seems to point, will be given below in chapter viii.

On the other hand, it has been shown that the so-called physical phenomena are a comparatively modern excrescence on the main growth. It is only within the last half-century that they have attained any considerable development. The faith in the communion and intervention of spirits originated before their appearance, and will probably outlast their final discredit. At the best, whatever effect they may have had in advertising the movement with the vulgar, they seem to have exerted only a subsidiary influence in inducing belief with more thoughtful men and women. It has been shown, moreover, that these physical manifestations are open to suspicion by reason of their pedigree and historical relationships; that they bear a strong resemblance to conjuring tricks; that similar phenomena have constantly been produced fraudulently; that in the few instances where the results recorded have so far resisted analysis, they are yet legitimately suspect as having been produced under conditions favourable to fraud, and in the presence of persons again and again convicted of fraud; that the precautions taken have been inadequate, and the qualifications of the witnesses in most cases not such as to inspire confidence in their ability to detect trickery of the kind probably practised; and that, generally, the strongest evidence yet considered for the genuineness of any of these manifestations falls far short of the standard of proof which is required before any such claim can be admitted.

Again, objections hardly less serious to the acceptance of these alleged marvels will be found in two considerations of a general kind. In the first place, if the physical effects claimed to have been produced are not due to known physical ıses, we have to assume, not one new force capable of

acting upon matter, but several. *Entia non sunt multiplicanda præter necessitatem;* but it would be too scrupulous a parsimony to delegate to one new mode of energy all the marvels reported at Spiritualist séances. It must be something more than a simple push-and-pull force, or a new form of vibrating energy, which should account for transportations and levitations, the materialisation of the human form, the abnormal resistance to fire exhibited by Home and others, the introduction of objects into closed spaces or their withdrawal from the same, the production of lights and musical sounds, the elongation of the human body, the tying of knots in an endless cord, the alteration of weight in the balance, and so on. The *a priori* presumption of fraud as the unique and all-sufficient agent is enormously strengthened by a mere recital of the list of duties sought to be imposed upon the hypothetical psychic force.

The other general objection is of a purely negative character. It is briefly this: the annals of Spiritualism offer no physical phenomena which do not, in the last analysis, depend on the experimenter's unaided senses for their observation, and on his memory for their record. Sir W. Crookes, in a well-known passage, refers to this characteristic of the evidence in existence at the time when he wrote—a generation ago—and indicated the rules to which scientific proof of a new physical force should conform:—

"The Spiritualist tells of rooms and houses being shaken even to injury by superhuman power. The man of science merely asks for a pendulum to be set vibrating when it is in a glass case and supported on solid masonry.

"The Spiritualist tells of heavy articles of furniture moving from one room to another without human agency. But the man of science has made instruments which will divide an inch into a million parts, and he is justified in doubting the accuracy of the former observations if the same force is powerless to move the index of his instrument one poor degree.

"The Spiritualist tells of flowers with the fresh dew on them, of fruit, and living objects being carried through closed windows, and even solid brick walls. The scientific investigator naturally asks that an additional weight (if it be only the thousandth part of a grain) be deposited on one pan of his balance when the case is locked. And the chemist asks for the thousandth of a grain of arsenic to be carried through the sides of a glass tube in which pure water is hermetically sealed."[1]

[1] *Researches in Spiritualism*, p. 6, by William Crookes, F.R.S.

In a word, the man of science demands that the alleged effect should be substantiated, and its extent precisely measured, by means of recording instruments, so contrived as to be proof against fraudulent manipulation—such as the locked chemical balance, the hermetically sealed tube, the self-registering thermometer, the photographic plate.

Now when Sir W. Crookes wrote—some thirty years ago—the absence of any evidence of this kind, though a serious defect, was scarcely in itself suspicious. The alleged phenomena had for the most part up to that time been investigated by persons without scientific training, who might be supposed not to be aware of the kind of proof required. The spirits, or the "ectenic" force, could not have failed to meet tests which had never been demanded. But in the generation which has passed since then, not only Sir. W. Crookes himself, but other trained and capable investigators, have examined the subject, have witnessed the phenomena, have, on occasion, propounded tests of the exact kind indicated. And the evidence stands now where it stood when the words were written, but with a difference. Competent witnesses have seen things which neither they nor we can explain, but no one can yet point to the fulfilment of the simple test proposed. Eminent persons have vouched for movements and alterations in the weight of heavy bodies, but the balance in its locked glass case has remained unaffected. Flowers and fruit and Parian statuettes have continued to make their appearance in closed rooms, but the least particle of arsenic has not yet found its way through the walls of the hermetically sealed tube. Intense cold has been felt at a séance, but has never been recorded by a self-registering thermometer. Many novel substances have been seen, smelt, and handled by various investigators, but here also no permanent trace has been preserved. We are dependent on the observer's recollection of fleeting glimpses of spirit lights, the rustle of spirit garments, and the touch of unknown bodies in the dark. Strange draperies, delicious scents, solid luminous bodies, even articulate human forms, have been produced out of the viewless air, and into the viewless air have returned unweighed, unanalysed, unrecorded on phonograph or sensitive plate, on balance or thermometer or resisting circuit.[1]

[1] There have, of course, been exceptions to this generalisation, and the exceptions furnish what is necessary, if anything more is needed, to clinch the conclusion. It would be superfluous to repeat here what we have learnt of spirit garments and spirit photographs, but, as will be shown later, attempts have

That however various the conditions, and however diverse the manifestations of the alleged new force, the evidence in all cases alike falls short in the one particular which alone could make it conclusive, furnishes a presumption against the genuineness of the phenomena which has in the course of two generations accumulated sufficient strength to be almost irresistible. Rigidly to exclude from consideration all evidence which fails to shift the burden of proof from the eyes and ears of the investigator to the dial of the instrument would perhaps be unwise, for we are dealing with forces which, whatever their nature, appear to depend for their successful working upon certain human organisms, and the mere propounding of such tests as those indicated may conceivably, even if the phenomena are genuine, by influencing the imagination of the medium act prejudicially upon the results. But assuredly the reality, whether of spirits or of psychic force, will never be substantiated except by evidence which conforms to this requirement. No other kind of evidence can be admitted to consideration except on sufferance, nor can any investigator claim a hearing who does not at least recognise such a standard as that at which all his observations and experiments should aim.[1]

again and again been made by scientific investigators to impose conditions which should dispense with the necessity for continuous observation, and those attempts have been foiled, as often as made, by the ingenuity of the medium. Thus Slade contrived to shirk the tasks of interlacing two solid rings cut out of different woods, of tying a knot in a continuous ring of bladder, of converting tartaric acid into its homologous racemic acid. He did, indeed, profess to tie knots in a sealed cord and abstract coins from a closed box, but only after opportunity for substitution had been afforded. Investigators have repeatedly left in Eglinton's possession double slates so fastened that they could not be opened without detection, and hermetically sealed glass tubes with tablets and pencil enclosed, but no writing has been obtained under such conditions.

[1] A homely illustration may serve to make the argument clearer. That the quarterly accounts from the grocer should reveal on scrutiny occasional mistakes in arithmetic would not necessarily reflect upon the tradesman's honesty. But if such mistakes should recur regularly, quarter after quarter, for more than half a century, and always in favour of the grocer, it would require a large charity to regard him as wanting only in mathematics. Physical mediums stand to-day in the same position as the dishonest grocer, with this difference, that they can retrieve, if not their own character, at least that of the phenomena, by presenting one flawless statement of account.

The paramount need for evidence of the kind indicated in the text has been generally recognised by the leading investigators of the physical phenomena. Sir W. Crookes' testimony has been already quoted. Dr. Lodge, in 1886, expressed himself as "agreeing with Mr. Gurney in considering that conditions which do not exclude the necessity for continuous close observation can never be completely satisfactory" (*Journal S. P. R.*, vol. ii. p. 290). See also Mrs. Sidgwick's discussion of the question (*Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. pp. 70–72) and Dr. Hodgson's criticisms, from this point of view, of the evidence generally, and especially of the evidence for slate-writing discussed in the next chapter.

Before, however, an adverse verdict is definitely recorded, it is proposed to give an account of some of the best-known foreign investigations, and to consider, at greater length and more critically than was practicable in the course of our brief historical survey, some items of English evidence.

Not merely will this further inquiry confirm, it may be anticipated, the conclusion already indicated—that the so-called physical phenomena are due wholly to fraud on the one hand, and misinterpretation or misrepresentation on the other—but undoubtedly it will help to throw light on the further problem how, being fictitious, these manifestations have yet won such widespread and enduring acceptance. The original source of the belief may no doubt be traced in mediæval superstitions and in the general proneness of the human mind to the marvellous. That intellectual indolence, remarked by Faraday, which prefers the easy solution of a miracle to the mental effort involved in the attempt to grapple with a problem is also no doubt largely responsible. And, further, the spread of the belief in the genuineness of these spurious marvels was, as we have seen, helped by their constant association with the genuine phenomena of the trance.

But these causes hardly seem in themselves adequate to account for the singular vitality of the belief, amongst even educated men, in face of repeated and flagrant exposures of trickery. There are, as will be shown, two special causes which are mainly responsible for a belief persistent often to the extent of infatuation: over-confidence in the testimony of the senses and over-confidence in the honesty of the medium. Some of the sources of error, almost peculiar to an investigation of this kind, ignorance of which begets over-confidence in the testimony of the senses, will be illustrated in chapters i.–iv. of this book, in the cases of Eusapia Paladino, Eglinton, and Home. On the other hand, the history of Stainton Moses, recounted in chapter v., will show us a man of good education, recognised social position, and unblemished repute, exhibiting to a circle of intimate friends feats which, to one who cannot share their confidence in the medium's integrity, must pass for some of the cheapest and most paltry miracles ever offered to human credulity.[1]

[1] As there are several persons still living who were on terms of intimacy with Mr. Stainton Moses, one or two of whom have been good enough to extend some measure of friendship to myself, I think it well to anticipate the fuller discussion below (chap. v.) by stating here that, apart from these hardly even dubious manifestations, I know of no reason for doubting Stainton Moses' personal integrity. To myself, after as full a study of the case as I have been

In chapters vi. and vii. an attempt will be made to analyse the pathology of mediumship. Chapter viii. will give a brief estimate of the evidence, especially as exhibited in the trance utterances of Mrs. Piper, for thought-transference, clairvoyance, and communion with the dead.

In the first instance there fall to be considered, less however from their intrinsic value as evidence than because they have demonstrably had a marked effect on the growth of the movement at large, a few typical cases of testimony from foreign sources. Probably the earliest investigations, in Europe at any rate, by men of any scientific attainments, which resulted in a verdict favourable to the phenomena, were those conducted in the autumn of 1853 by Count Agenor de Gasparin.[1] De Gasparin, a late convert to Christianity, was concerned primarily to prove, in the interests of revealed religion, that the raps and movements of tables which were agitating the mind of Paris were due neither to angels nor devils, but to a physical force emanating from the human body and controlled by the human will. De Gasparin was hardly, perhaps, himself entitled to be called a man of science, but he was assisted in some of his experiments by M. Thury, a professor in the Academy of Geneva and member of the *Société de Physique et d'Histoire naturelle.* Thury generally confirms de Gasparin's conclusions, and proposes the name "ectenic force" for the agency presumed to be demonstrated.[2] The fact that the experiences of Thury and de Gasparin have been cited by Mrs. H. Sidgwick as amongst the best attested in the history of Spiritualism;[3] and that, more recently, Thury's monograph, reinforced by personal discussion with its author, has begot, in the mind of so acute a critic as M. Flournoy, a presumption in favour of the physical phenomena, entitles their work to our fullest consideration.[4]

The experiments which are regarded by the authors as crucial were of three types: (1) A table was suspended from one arm of a balance, with a counterpoise on the other

able to give, it seems hardly more difficult, in sole reliance on the medium's honesty, to believe in the phenomena than it is, on the sole ground of the phenomena, to impugn that honesty. The solution of the paradox will, no doubt, as indicated below, be found in the assumption of some abnormal division of consciousness.

[1] *Des Tables tournantes, du Surnatural en général et des Esprits.* Paris, 1854.

[2] *Les Tables tournantes considérées au point de vue de la question de physique générale qui s'y rattache.* Geneva, 1855.

[3] Article "Spiritualism" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica.*

[4] *Des Indes à la Planète Mars*, p. 356.

arm, in such a way that the force required to move the table upwards could be exactly measured.[1] Under these conditions upward movements of the table were observed, indicating on one occasion a pull of 4·27 kilos.

(2) After a table of the ordinary type had been set in violent rotation with the hands of the assistants resting on it, these would be suddenly removed and the table would be observed to continue its rotation for two or three revolutions, without apparent contact from those present.

(3) Or, again, the assistants would from the outset link their hands together above the surface of the table, near to it, but without actual contact, and movements of the table would be observed. The absence of contact would be assured, sometimes by sprinkling the whole surface of the table with flour from a vine-sprinkler, sometimes by the experimenters watching both above and below the table.[2]

It will be seen that the results depend for their acceptance on the sufficiency of the precautions taken to exclude action of the hands, feet, knees, and other parts of the person below the table. These precautions appear to me, so far as can be gathered from the scanty records, to have been wholly insufficient. The records of the experiments are extremely brief, and hardly any detailed accounts of individual experiments are given; the names of the assistants nowhere appear; but we learn that the persons present numbered on some occasions as many as twelve, that this number included several servants and children, and that, generally speaking, the children were found to be more successful operators than their elders.[3] Neither de Gasparin nor Thury appear to have sufficiently appreciated the possibilities of unconscious muscular action or of fraud; nor the extreme difficulty of detecting the kind of half-conscious fraud which later experience has shown that children and young persons are prone on such occasions to practise. One can only regret that an investigator so open-minded and so conscientious as Thury should not have had opportunities of pursuing his investigations, in which case it is possible that with wider experience he would have come to different conclusions.

An investigator of a very different type was Baron L. de Guldenstubbé.[4] He had been for some years interested in

[1] It was prevented from moving in a downward direction by a leg which just touched the ground.

[2] The most detailed account of the precautions taken will be found in Thury's pamphlet, pp. 15, 16.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 28, footnote.

[4] *La Réalité des Esprits et le phénomène merveilleux de leur Ecriture directe.* Paris, 1857.

Animal Magnetism, but always from the Spiritualist standpoint; he laughs at Humboldt for denying that the conjunction of Saturn in 1789 influenced the course of events in France in that year; and at scientific men in general for refusing to believe that the will of the operator radiated from his body as a material effluence in the process of magnetism.[1] For some years he had sought an irrefragable demonstration of the immortality of the soul. When, in 1850, news first reached Paris of the American Spiritualist movement, de Guldenstubbé believed himself to have found what he sought. He lost no time in forming a circle at his own house, amongst the assistants being M. Roustan, the well-known magnetist. As it was one of the conditions that at these, the earliest Spiritualist circles held in Paris, the members of the circle should join hands, but the medium or mediums be left absolutely free, we are not surprised to read that remarkable phenomena were obtained, such as raps, mysterious noises, and movements of furniture.

But it was not until some years later that the Baron obtained the crucial proof which he had so long been seeking. In August, 1856, urged thereto not more by rumours of the recent doings at Stratford, Conn.,[2] than by the recollection of Belshazzar's feast and other biblical precedents, he determined to try for direct writing "*without the intervention of a medium.*"[3] He began by putting paper and pencil in a small locked box, of which he carried the key on his own person. On the thirteenth day he opened the box, and found some written characters on the paper; this experience was repeated ten times on the same day. Later, in company with the Comte d'Ourches and other friends, he visited churches, cemeteries, and public galleries, and obtained writing on pieces of paper left on tombs or on the pedestals of statues. The writings so obtained were in various languages — Latin, Greek, Russian, French, German, English, etc.—and proceeded not only from the spirits of deceased friends, but from such illustrious personages as Mary Stuart, St. Paul, Cicero, Melchisedec, Plato, and Juvenal. From the reproductions published at the end of the book it would appear that the French and German were commonly written in small, regular, and perfectly legible characters; in the Latin and Greek, however, the letters are large, irregular, and so badly formed that it is difficult to feel satisfied that the scribe was really acquainted with those languages.

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. xvi., xvii. [2] See above, vol. i. pp. 196–7. [3] Page 67.

De Guldenstubbé gives no description of the circumstances under which these writings were obtained; and it might be inferred, from his silence on the point, and from the phrase already quoted, that he and his personal friends were alone at the time of the experiments. There is one significant exception, however. After relating that on the 24th November, 1856, at his own apartments, he and Baron de Brewern had obtained communications from Cicero and Plato, he remarks incidentally that before the commencement of the séance, whilst waiting for two other witnesses who failed to keep their appointment, the furniture had begun to creak, and that *the medium then placed herself at the piano, bidding them place an untouched packet of paper in a particular spot.* At the end of a quarter of an hour the medium stopped playing, the packet of paper was opened, and the productions of Cicero and Plato, together with some English writing signed "Spencer," were revealed. Later we learn that the spirits themselves frequently prescribed the place and time for the experiments.[1] From this incidental reference it may perhaps not unjustly be inferred that a medium may also have been present at the other experiments in churches and galleries.

In any case, it would be impossible to derive from experiences so meagrely and uncritically described any support for the Spiritualist hypothesis. Nevertheless, the publication of Guldenstubbé's book created a profound impression in Spiritualist circles, alike in France and in this country, and his experiments are constantly referred to by the earlier English Spiritualists as striking demonstrations of spiritual agency.

Twenty years later an investigation of a more elaborate character, and under the auspices of men of recognised scientific reputation, was undertaken in Germany. The medium in this case also was best known for the production in his presence of "direct" writing. But the conditions of the experiments are described in some detail, with the names and attestations of the assistants and with considerable display of scientific method.

Johann C. F. Zöllner, Professor of Physical Astronomy in the University of Leipsic, in the years 1877–88, with the occasional assistance of his colleagues, Professors Scheibner and Fechner, and of Professor Wilhelm P. Weber and others,[2] undertook an inquiry into the phenomena produced

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 83–5.

[2] Professor Wundt attended two or three of the sittings.

in the presence of "Dr." Slade. That Slade had been already convicted of fraudulent practices may be conceded to have but little bearing upon the matter one way or the other. The presumption in favour of fraud as the explanation of the physical phenomena is so overwhelming that it is not appreciably increased by a demonstration of fraud in any particular case. In short, Slade's past may be left out of account, and Zöllner's recorded observations may be considered on their merits.

Zöllner was at the time enamoured of the conception of space of four dimensions, and many of his experiments were designed to elicit some confirmation of his theory that the spirits lived in a world so conditioned. Thus, in four-dimensional space it should be possible to produce in an endless cord a simple knot such as under ordinary terrestrial conditions would require the use of the free ends of the cord. On the 16th December, 1877, accordingly, Zöllner took two pieces of new hempen cord and sealed the free ends of each on to a piece of cardboard. Two similar cords were prepared in like manner by Weber. On the following day—the 17th December—at 10.30 a.m., the investigators met in the séance-room, and, to quote Zöllner's own account—

"I myself selected one of the four sealed cords, and in order never to lose sight of it, before we sat down at the table I hung it around my neck—the seal in front always within my sight. During the séance, as previously stated, I constantly kept the seal—remaining unaltered—before me on the table. Mr. Slade's hands remained *all the time* in sight; with the left he often touched his forehead, complaining of painful sensations. The portion of the string hanging down rested on my lap—out of my sight, it is true—but Mr. Slade's hands *always* remained visible to me. I particularly noticed that Mr. Slade's hands were not withdrawn or changed in position. He himself appeared to be perfectly passive, so that we cannot advance the assertion of his having tied those knots by his *conscious* will, but only that they, under these detailed circumstances, were formed *in his presence* without *visible contact*, and in a room illuminated by bright daylight."

For, in effect, at the end of the séance the cord was found to have four knots in it of the precise kind required.[1]

Zöllner's account of the experiment, it will be seen, is fairly detailed. But there is one detail which he omits to give—that the experiment had frequently been tried

[1] *Transcendental Physics*, translated from the German of Zöllner by C. C. Massey, pp. 17, 18. London, 1880.

before and had failed. The real significance of this fact (which we only learn from an incidental reference in another volume of his work, and in a different connection) is that Slade knew what was expected of him, and had the opportunity of preparing duplicate cords. All that was then required at the séance would be to effect a substitution of his own prepared cord for that brought to the séance by Zöllner; a matter which to an expert conjurer would present little difficulty.[1]

Again, if we posit four-dimensional space, we can understand, by analogy with space of three and two dimensions, that substances could be removed from a closed (cubical) space "without disturbance of the three-dimensional material walls."[2] To test this hypothesis Zöllner had enclosed some pieces of money in small cardboard boxes, which were afterwards securely closed by gluing strips of paper round them. On the 5th May, 1878, in broad daylight, these boxes were placed on the table. In the course of the séance a five-mark piece and two smaller coins successively made their appearance on a slate held under the table, and the cardboard boxes on being opened were found empty except for two small pieces of slate pencil.

As a commentary on this performance it is only necessary to state that the experiment had been tried and had failed some six months previously; that the boxes had not been opened in the interval; and that Zöllner had kept no record of the values or the dates of the coins enclosed.[3] Again, opportunity for preparation on the part of the medium and for substitution was afforded.

Zöllner frequently explains that the phenomena were beyond either his or Slade's control, and that hence he could not ensure the success of the experiment which he had previously prepared, though the spirits generally gave him a test even better than that which he had devised. The following is one of the instances cited in proof of this claim. Zöllner had had two rings, one of oak and one of alder, turned from the solid wood, also a ring cut out of a piece of bladder. He had hoped that the spirits would tie knots in the ring of bladder, such as had been tied, as already described,

[1] See Mrs. Sidgwick's illuminating discussion of this point (*Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. p. 65, footnote).

[2] A description at once humorous and intelligible to the non-mathematical person of the hypothetical properties of space of four dimensions is given in a little book called *Flatland: a Romance of many dimensions, by a Square*, published in 1884, and written, it is understood, by Dr. Edwin Abbott.

[3] *Transcendental Physics*, p. 155.

in the sealed cord, and that they would interlace the seamless rings of wood, in each case furnishing permanent and irrefragable proof of superhuman power. What actually happened was that, at the conclusion of the séance held on the evening of the 9th May, 1878, a small white mark was discovered on the bladder ring, and the two wooden rings, or two others like them, were found strung on the leg of a small wooden table, which it does not appear that Zöllner—he was alone with the medium—had examined before the séance.

Other tests were refused altogether. Zöllner had provided himself with spiral snail-shells, hoping that, in four-dimensional space, the direction of the spire might be reversed; with a tube of dextro-rotatory tartaric acid, to be converted into lævo-rotatory racemic acid; with a hollow bulb of blown glass, into which a piece of paraffin-wax was to be introduced by spiritual agency. All these and similar tests were evaded or declined.

In short, so far as we can judge from the printed records, the precautions taken throughout the whole series of performances were quite inadequate to exclude trickery, and the recital is so artless that we can often see, as we read, how the trick was probably done, and note the conjurer's familiar devices for distracting the sitter's attention at the critical moment.[1]

The so-called "experimental investigations" (which, seeing that the medium, as explained by Zöllner himself, constantly declined the experiment proposed and substituted something else, were never really experimental) are worth discussion only because of the scientific distinction of those who took part in them, and the credit which Zöllner's reputation inevitably gained for the manifestations which he records.[2]

[1] Note, for instance, the account (*Transcendental Physics*, pp. 91, 92) of the miraculous disappearance and reappearance of a small round table. Zöllner was sitting alone with Slade. The small table had inexplicably disappeared. They sat in intense expectation of the next phenomenon, when "suddenly Slade again asserted that he saw lights in the air; although I, as usual, could perceive nothing whatever of the kind, I yet followed involuntarily with my gaze the directions to which Slade turned his head, during all which time our hands remained constantly on the table resting on each other [*übereinander liegend*]. . . . Looking up in the air eagerly and astonished in different directions, Slade asked me if I did not perceive the great lights. I answered decidedly in the negative; but as I turned my head, following Slade's gaze up to the ceiling of the room behind my back, I suddenly observed, at the height of about five feet, the hitherto invisible table, with its legs turned upwards, very quickly floating down in the air upon the top of the card-table. This took place at half-past eleven on the morning of the 6th May, 1878." On page 89 Zöllner tells us that Slade generally saw lights in the air immediately before manifestations of this kind.

[2] In face of Zöllner's own descriptions and unconscious admissions, it hardly seems necessary to discuss the question whether or not he was, at the time of the

members of the Committee attended singly, and for the most part anonymously, at séances with Mrs. Thayer, J. V. Mansfield, and other well-known professional mediums.

It would be unprofitable to recount at length the results of the Committee's labours. When they sought to impose such conditions as would render fraud impossible, they met either with a blank refusal on the part of the medium or with an acquiescence equally barren of results. The record, however, of what they saw, when thus reduced to passive observation of such marvels as the mediums chose to exhibit, has some interest. They detected without serious difficulty the methods by which Slade and other slate-writing performers produced their effects, and the nature of the imposture at some semi-dark séances with Keeler and Rothermel. Individual members of the Committee revealed the secrets of materialisation séances and the means by which sealed letters or closed pellets are opened and read.

With the exception of the last feat, for which some dexterity and ingenuity are required, the mediumistic performances described are remarkable chiefly for the puerile nature of the deception. It is difficult to realise that anyone could be taken in by such feeble devices as those employed at these latter-day materialisation séances, or by the clumsy legerdemain of Mr. Pierre Keeler, who, flanked on one hand by his wife, and guarded at a little distance on the other by two friendly sitters, contrived under the cover of semi-darkness to play a tambourine, ring a bell, and do various other things with his right hand whilst sitting in front of a black-curtained cabinet. Even Dr. Slade, the pioneer of slate-writing in this country, shows himself distinctly inferior in skill to Eglinton.

In the light of the experience already gained, it may now be found profitable to consider more in detail the special difficulties and fallacies incidental to the investigation of the so-called physical phenomena of Spiritualism. There are two main sources of error which are peculiar to this inquiry: darkness, and the difficulty of maintaining continuous observation even in the light.

From the beginning of the movement dark séances have been general. Darkness is not, perhaps, in itself an unreasonable condition. Light is, of course, a mode of motion; in photography, in bleaching processes, and other familiar reactions we can see that light produces permanent physical effects. It cannot therefore fairly be held as antecedently

improbable that light should prejudicially interfere with the operation of such an exquisite physical agency as is supposed to be at work in the production of spiritualistic phenomena. That darkness should also be a condition peculiarly favourable to fraud may be merely a regrettable incident of the investigation. In fairness it should be admitted that sensible Spiritualists very early recognised the objection to dark séances, but they have hesitated to discard altogether a condition so constantly and imperatively demanded by the medium; and have preferred rather to devise, or accept from the medium and his friends, precautions against trickery. Those precautions—when all tests have not been of set purpose omitted—have been of two kinds. It may be sought to prevent the medium's active participation in the production of phenomena, on the one hand, by placing him in a locked or sealed receptacle, by tying him to a chair, including him in an electric circuit, or otherwise securing his person. Of the value of precautions of this kind, especially as adopted at "materialisation" séances, enough has perhaps been said in previous chapters. The example of the Davenport Brothers will serve to show how difficult it is to devise ligatures which will baffle an expert conjurer. Many Spiritualists themselves have recognised this difficulty.[1]

But another, and in the view of most investigators a more effectual safeguard, is for the medium to sit in the circle, and for one or more of those present to hold his hands and occasionally his feet. How convincing this test of "hand-holding" still appears even to the experienced Spiritualist may be learnt from the records of test séances to be found in any Spiritualist newspaper.[2]

It is indeed practically impossible for the novice, and extremely difficult for the investigator who has profited by long experience, to realise the extraordinary ineffectiveness of the untrained senses in detective work of the kind required. Even in the case of slate-writing and other performances in the light, when the observer has, if he knows how to use them, the full use of his eyes, the lacunæ,

[1] For further illustrations of the ease with which the medium can evade almost any tests imposed whilst he or she remains in the "cabinet," see the *Seybert Report*, already referred to, and Mrs. H. Sidgwick's article, "Results of a Personal Investigation" (*Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. p. 75).

[2] In [illegible] contemporary notes of a dark séance with the medium Rita, which I [illegible] 1890, I find that the holding of the medium's hands by [illegible] seemed to me a sufficient precaution against trickery. [illegible] fully reflected the views of Spiritualists [illegible] that even to the present time most [illegible].

what feats are being performed, but also to guard against the medium's complicity in the performance. How entirely inadequate for these purposes the sense of touch must be may be learnt from the recent history of the Italian medium, Eusapia Paladino.

Eusapia Paladino has been a medium for many years,[1] and has been the subject of experiments by several groups of observers, which have been reported at considerable length in the continental periodicals devoted to Spiritualism. Her name first came prominently before the English public in 1893, as a result of the investigations conducted at Milan in the previous autumn by a group of scientific men—Professors Schiaparelli, Brofferio, Finzi, Gerosa, and others. Charles Richet and Lombroso also attended a few of the séances. The chief manifestations observed in the light were the lifting of a fairly heavy table, with the medium sitting at one end of it, her hands being held and the lower portion of her body being under observation, and an oscillation—to the extent of some 17 lbs.—in the weight indicated by the balance when Eusapia was sitting on the platform of a weighing machine. The results obtained seemed to the Committee inexplicable, but neither form of experiment succeeded when stringent precautions were taken to prevent the contact of any portion of the medium's dress, with the leg of the table in the one case, with the floor on which the balance rested in the other. The Committee expressed themselves satisfied that the results were not due to mechanical artifices, but Richet, in a separate report, arrived at a more cautious conclusion.

It is, however, primarily the phenomena observed in the dark circle with which we are now concerned—movements of furniture and other objects, raps, the appearance and touch of hands, and other manifestations of familiar types. To the Milan Committee these also seemed all but conclusive; but Professor Richet again pointed out the weak spot in the evidence. The things would be inexplicable if we could be sure that Eusapia could not use her hands, but this is how her hands were secured:—

"Dans les expériences, Eusapia n'a pas, en général, la main tenue de la même manière à droite et à gauche. D'un côté, on lui tient

[1] According to her own account, she was born in 1854. We read in the *Spiritual Magazine* of 1872, p. 287, of a physical medium named Sapia Padalino (no doubt a corruption of the Italian medium's name), who would write with her naked finger, leaving marks as if made with a pencil. The trick is a favourite one with Eusapia in recent times. See also *Spiritualist*, 1873, p. 140; *Human Nature*, 1872, p. 222, etc.

fortement le poignet et la main ; de l'autre côté, au lieu d'avoir la main tenue par le voisin, elle se contente de poser sa main sur la main du voisin, mais de la poser avec tous ses doigts, de manière qu'on puisse sentir très distinctement si l'on tient la main gauche ou droite.

"Voici alors ce qui passe : Au moment on va commencer le phénomène, cette main qui n'est pas tenue par le voisin, mais se pose sur sa main (je suppose qu'il s'agisse, pour simplifier, de la main droite d'Eusapia, quoiqu'elle opère ainsi tantôt à droite, tantôt à gauche), cette main devient très mobile, presque insaisissable : à chaque instant elle se déplace, et pendant une fraction minuscule de seconde on ne la sent plus ; puis on la sent de nouveau, et on peut constater que c'est toujours la main droite." [1]

Professor Richet was nevertheless so impressed by his experiences that eighteen months later, in the summer of 1894, he invited a small party of friends to a series of experiments with Eusapia at his own house, on the Ile Roubaud, near Hyères. Amongst those who attended the investigation were Dr. Ochorowicz, Professor Oliver Lodge, and Mr. F. W. H. Myers. The things observed were of the same general character as those recorded at Milan, and at hundreds of other séances with other physical mediums for the last fifty years ; that is, when the medium was sitting at an ordinary table, with the members of the circle ranged on each side of her and the room carefully darkened by her directions, a musical box would be wound up, small articles would be brought from distant parts of the room and placed on the table in front of the investigators, heavy pieces of furniture would occasionally be moved, the touch of hands would be felt, shadowy hands occasionally seen, and so on.

Apart from the scientific distinction of the investigators, the history of these seemingly trivial performances is worthy of note (1) because a contemporary record of the whole proceedings was kept by a note-taker stationed outside the room, but within hearing of all that took place ; (2) because the observers named—none of them without previous experience in such matters—professed themselves satisfied that the precautions taken to prevent Eusapia's physical participation in the production of the phenomena were sufficient.

Even if the medium had the free use of her hands, Professor Lodge and Mr. Myers, at any rate, considered that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for her without leaving her seat to have done the things that were done in their presence at the earlier sittings. At the later meetings

[1] *Annales des Sciences Psychiques*, Jan.-Feb., 1893, p. 14.

of the series, however, the character of the phenomena, by the general testimony of the observers, appears to have deteriorated, for Mrs. H. Sidgwick, who, with the late Professor Sidgwick, attended some of these later meetings, was of opinion that all the phenomena which she witnessed could have been produced by the medium if her hands alone had been free.[1]

In any case, the proof of the supernormal agency in which Professor Lodge and other witnesses were disposed, on the strength of these manifestations, to believe, depended primarily on the effectiveness of the means adopted to secure the medium's body and limbs. For if the medium could free a hand, or even on occasion a foot, the question whether she could by the use of those limbs overthrow a heavy table, or take out a key from a distant door, could be satisfactorily determined only by exact measurements of a kind for which in the actual conditions there was apparently no opportunity.[2]

Now there is a time-honoured device, exposed in the seventies by Moncure Conway,[3] and afterwards by Maskelyne[4] and others, by which mediums at dark séances succeed in freeing themselves from the control of the sitter. It may be described briefly as the art of making one hand (or one foot) do duty for two. Thus, if the hand is to be freed, the medium will contrive that one at least of her neighbours shall

[1] *Journal S. P. R.*, Nov., 1894, p. 339.

[2] Dr. Lodge's report, together with some additional comments by Mr. Myers and Mrs. Sidgwick, and some excerpts from the detailed notes of the sittings, will be found in the *Journal S. P. R.* for November, 1894. From these notes it appears that most of the manifestations occurred within the immediate neighbourhood of the medium, and none can be said demonstrably to have taken place outside the radius of the possible action of her hand or foot, especially if either were armed with some instrument, such as a lazy-tongs. The amount of force exerted in some feats, such as overthrowing a heavy table, was no doubt very remarkable, but not more remarkable than the extraordinary muscular power of Eusapia's left hand, as demonstrated by Dr. Lodge's dynamometer. Eusapia sent the index to 210° (indicating a force of 168 lbs.); none of the rest of the party at the time got beyond 152°, though Dr. Lodge can, under favourable circumstances, register 170° = about 133 lbs. apparently (*Journal S. P. R.*, Nov., 1894, p. 326).

Again, the writing with a bare finger (in the light) and other feats of writing markedly resemble conjuring tricks; the lifting of a table by Eusapia standing could probably, as Dr. Hodgson pointed out and as Dr. Lodge admitted, have been effected by a simple mechanism (*Journal S. P. R.*, March–April, 1895, p. 66); the bulging (*gonflement*) of the curtain constantly observed at séances with Eusapia, taken in conjunction with the large, vague, semi-transparent shadowy faces seen at other séances, and the prolonged blowing of the medium *comme pour allumer du feu*, strongly suggest the employment of a collapsible bladder (see Fontenay, *Apropos d'Eusapia Paladino*, pp. 76, 77).

[3] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1875, p. 285.

[4] See an interview with Mr. Maskelyne in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18th April, 1885. Mr. Maskelyne himself was for a time deceived by the substitution.

have control only of a part of her hand.[1] During the séance, by a series of convulsive movements, such as are commonly observed in the case of Eusapia, and, indeed, in mediums generally, before the outburst of the physical manifestations, she will bring her two hands into close proximity on the table, and then, at a favourable moment, will withdraw one hand, leaving the other in contact at the same time with the hand of each of her neighbours, who will each, of course, believe that they are touching a different hand. Some device of the kind, it may be inferred from the description already quoted from Professor Richet, Eusapia had employed at the Milan investigation. The investigators of the Ile Roubaud were not ignorant of this danger. Both hands and both feet of the medium were held or controlled, the hands as a rule being held by the hands of one or more of the sitters, the feet controlled either by the hands or feet of an investigator, or by a piece of mechanism devised for the purpose. Moreover, the investigators frequently took occasion to assure themselves, before or after the occurrence of a manifestation, that the sitters detailed to guard the several parts of the medium's person were not neglecting their duty. Nevertheless, when the notes of some of the sittings reached Dr. Hodgson, he pointed out that the precautions described therein did not expressly exclude trickery of the kind indicated. Briefly, Dr. Hodgson's contention was that mere general statements to the effect that Eusapia's hands and feet were held throughout the sitting give us no assurance that a hand or a foot could not be freed for fraudulent purposes. Effectively to guard against trickery at a dark séance it is essential that the investigators should fully realise the precise nature of the trickery to be guarded against, and should undertake and maintain throughout the séance express precautions against such trickery. That those dangers were exactly realised and those precautions continuously maintained, the report did not show; in place of explicit descriptions of the method of holding, the notes furnish, for the most part, bare statements to the effect that Eusapia's hands, feet, and head were held by one or other of the sitters. Nor could these defects in the contemporary records be remedied

[1] This partial control may be of various kinds: either, as described by Richet, the medium may place her fingers, or some of them, *on* the hand of the sitter; or, as in Williams' séances in London at the present time, the sitter may be allowed to grasp two fingers only of the medium's hand; or, as at some American séances, the medium may clasp both his hands upon the bare arm of the sitter, subsequently withdrawing one and making the remaining hand, widely outspread, do duty for both (see *Seybert Report*, pp. 23, 83, 90).

by an assertion given in general terms some months afterwards of the investigators' conviction that the hands were securely held.[1]

The next act was of a dramatic kind. Eusapia came to this country in the summer of 1895, and gave a series of sittings at Mr. Myers' house at Cambridge. At these sittings the investigators (including, at the end of the series, Dr. Hodgson himself) satisfied themselves that the medium did habitually, by devices similar to those above described, contrive to set free her hand or foot, or, on occasion, her head, and that the great bulk of the feats exhibited at Cambridge were to be explained in this way.[2]

As already said, it may fairly be contended that the demonstration of trickery on the part of a medium, even trickery of a kind which implies long and assiduous practice, ought not seriously to prejudice the results of any investigation in which it can be shown that adequate precautions had actually been taken to guard against such trickery, for it is not antecedently improbable, on the assumption that the medium is endowed with supernormal powers, that she should occasionally cheat.

The triumph of Dr. Hodgson's demonstration lacked, it must thus be admitted, something of completeness. His argument did not, and from its nature perhaps could not, convince the investigators of the Ile Roubaud.[3] Professor Richet and his colleagues believed, on evidence which seemed to them at the time sufficient and would no doubt equally have seemed sufficient to any other investigators who had not had previous personal experience of the kind of fraud probably employed, that the precautions taken were effectual. Unfortunately the record of those precautions, as shown, is incomplete. The evidence that the holding was effective and continuous, consists, essentially, in the recollection of a series of impressions of the least intellectual of our senses. Now tactile impressions, vague, faint, and nameless at the time, present in the retrospect no picture at all comparable in precision and intensity to the memories of things actually

[1] *Journal S. P. R.*, March–April, 1895, p. 56. Dr. Hodgson's criticism and the replies of the investigators are printed at length in this number.

[2] *Journal S. P. R.*, Oct. and Nov., 1895.

[3] Mr. Myers' belief was, indeed, shaken, if not actually overthrown at the time. Later, however, as a sequel to some sittings held with Eusapia in Paris, in December, 1898, at which both Myers and Richet were present, these two gentlemen and Dr. Lodge took occasion, at a general meeting of the S. P. R., held in the following January, to reaffirm their belief in the genuineness of some at least of the physical phenomena occurring in the presence of Eusapia (see *Journal S. P. R.*, March, 1899, pp. 34, 35).

seen; and how fallacious, at the best, are even our visual memories will be shown in the next chapter.

It seems a legitimate conclusion that all the feats which could be explained on the assumption that Eusapia had free use of any limb must be left out of account. The remainder seem neither sufficiently numerous nor sufficiently striking to justify suspension of judgment. The margin of error in circumstances so little favourable to exact observation is necessarily wide, and it is scarcely unfair to assume that a proved trickster may have other tricks as yet undiscovered.

In fine, if we decide to reject the evidence in favour of Eusapia's supernormal powers, that decision is in the last analysis justified, not by the completeness of the explanation offered by Dr. Hodgson, which is necessarily based largely on conjecture, nor by the apparent lacunæ in the evidence, nor by any specific distrust of the competence of the distinguished investigators of the Ile Roubaud. The justification is that the results attained, even when vouched for by such high authority, depending, as they do, on observation, and not on automatic record, are not sufficiently free from ambiguity to weigh against the presumption derived, as indicated in the early part of this chapter, from an examination of all previous evidence upon the subject. Furthermore, as will be shown in the next chapter, the presumption is strengthened, as regards these particular observations, by the reflection that other experimenters, inferior perhaps in general competence, but placed in circumstances much more favourable to observation, have been deceived again and again by devices not less obvious, when explained.[1]

[1] Not the least instructive feature in the history of Eusapia is the attitude of some other continental investigators who subsequently held sittings with her. In the autumn of 1895, immediately after the Cambridge fiasco, Messrs. Sabatier, de Rochas, Dariex, de Watteville, and others had a series of six sittings. They had been furnished by Mr. Myers with a full account of the manner in which Eusapia had produced fraudulent phenomena in this country; but they failed to profit by the lesson. Eusapia's feet were still "controlled," as a rule, by being placed on the feet of the investigator, or *vice versâ*; and one of her hands was still allowed to be placed on, instead of being held by, the hand of her neighbour; the light was subdued in accordance with the medium's wishes; and the liberality of the investigators was rewarded by an abundance of the usual manifestations (*Annales des Sciences Psychiques*, Jan.-Feb., 1896). The chronicler of a still more recent series of sittings, M. de Fontenay, ostentatiously proclaims his contempt for the meticulous criticisms of Dr. Hodgson, and excuses himself from the intolerably tedious task of describing in detail the precautions taken. The reader is asked to accept his assurance that they were "more than sufficient" for their purpose (*Apropos d'Eusapia Paladino; les séances de Montfort l'Amaury, 25-28 Juillet, 1897*, pp. 15, 28, 29, etc. Paris, 1898).

CHAPTER II

SLATE-WRITING

MOST readers will, it is likely, have little difficulty in accepting the conclusion indicated in the preceding chapter, that the physical phenomena in general were due to fraud. To many, indeed, the demonstration will, it is to be anticipated, have appeared superfluous. If we appeal to the scientific attainments and general intelligence of some of those who have vouched for the genuineness of the physical marvels, as proof that the trickery was not so obvious as, after the explanation, it may appear to have been, the rejoinder that men of general culture and even men of science are not specially qualified to detect conjuring tricks carries some weight. But it is pertinent to point out that conjurers—even eminent conjurers—have themselves admitted the genuineness of some of these suspected manifestations. Houdin's testimony to the clairvoyant powers of Alexis has already been quoted.[1] Mr. Maskelyne has put it on record that he has witnessed movements of the table which could not in his judgment have been produced by trickery or by unconscious muscular action, and which forced him to look for an explanation in some "psychic or nerve force."[2] And Samuel Bellachini, Court conjurer at Berlin, in December, 1877, executed a solemn declaration before a notary to the effect that not only had he failed to discover any mechanical means by which the phenomena occurring in Slade's presence could have been produced, but that he regarded it as impossible to explain these occurrences by prestidigitation of any kind.[3]

Of all the physical phenomena of mediumship, the slate-writing performances of such men as Slade and Eglinton

[1] Vol. i. p. 143.

[2] "A Chat with Mr. Maskelyne," *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 20th, 1885, and letter from Mr. Maskelyne, in the issue of April 23rd.

[3] Quoted in Zöllner's *Transcendental Physics*, English translation, by C. C. Massey, p. 261. London, 1880.

appear to have proved most baffling to the expert. Mr. Harry Kellar, after his first séance with Eglinton, was of opinion that the slate-writing "was in no way the result of trickery or sleight-of-hand."[1] Lord Rayleigh quoted at the British Association meeting of 1876 the testimony of a professional conjurer, who was unable to explain Slade's performances.[2] Dr. George Herschell, a well-known amateur conjurer, after some months of practice and many sittings with Eglinton, failed to rival the latter's performances, and expressed his opinion that they could not have been due to trickery or conjuring.[3] Further instances of professional or amateur prestidigitators being nonplussed by the slate-writing of Eglinton and others are quoted by Mrs. Henry Sidgwick and Dr. Hodgson.[4] Even Mr. Maskelyne admits that some of Slade's devices were new to him, and that it cost him "a few weeks' hard practice" to attain proficiency in them.[5] That Spiritualists in general failed to discover how these feats of sleight-of-hand were accomplished is not perhaps surprising; and that, so failing, they should immediately have postulated spirits or psychic force as the active agency, is of course in accordance with precedents sanctioned by some centuries of observance.

Slade, as already explained, was prevented from visiting England after 1876, and his performances were matter only for historical investigation. But he found in William Eglinton a competent successor. In the year 1886 about a hundred persons, professed Spiritualists and others, many of them men of distinction in various departments, sent reports to the Spiritualist newspaper, *Light*, testifying to the marvellous spirit-writing on slates produced in Eglinton's presence. In the history of the movement no physical manifestation ever won such universal recognition. The evidence, indeed, for this particular marvel seemed irrefragable. As Mr. C. C. Massey wrote in 1886: "Many, of whom I am one, are of opinion that the case for these phenomena generally, and for 'autography'[6] in particular, is already complete."[7] As evidence of the position which Eglinton held in the estimation of Spiritualists, it may be added that he was invited in the

[1] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. p. 411.
[2] Report of the discussion in the *Glasgow Herald*, Sept. 13th, 1876.
[3] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. p. 97, and *Journal*, July, 1886, p. 354.
[4] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. pp. 59 and 412.
[5] *The Supernatural* (?), p. 194, by Dr. Weatherly and Mr. J. N. Maskelyne. 1891; see also *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 20th, 1885.
[6] *i.e.* "direct" writing, of which slate-writing was the best-known form.
[7] See *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. p. 98.

course of the same year, 1886, to read a paper before the London Spiritualist Alliance.

Slate-writing, then, as produced at Eglinton's séances, was by the general consent of Spiritualists ascribed to supernormal agencies. The manifestation offered special facilities for investigation as compared with most other kinds of physical phenomena, inasmuch as it was produced in full light; was fairly constant in its appearance, instances of completely unsuccessful séances being comparatively rare; and, from the nature of the experiment, the conditions presented, or seemed to present, the fullest opportunity for examination. The Society for Psychical Research had for some years been collecting from its own members and others accounts of Eglinton's performances, and the occasion seemed fitting for a crucial test of the pretensions of Spiritualism.

Antecedently, indeed, apart from the general presumption against the operation of any hitherto unrecognised agency in nature, there were special grounds for suspecting the results in this particular case to be due to trickery. Eglinton had on at least two occasions been detected in fraudulently simulating occult phenomena. In 1876, at a time when he was giving materialisation séances, Archdeacon Colley and Mr. Owen Harries had discovered in his portmanteau some muslin and a false beard, and had found further that these actually matched some fragments of drapery and hair cut a few days previously from the spirit form of "Abdullah," the medium's spirit guide.[1] Eglinton had also co-operated with Madame Blavatsky in manufacturing a theosophic miracle, the "astral" conveyance of a letter from a ship in mid-ocean.[2] Moreover, several observers claimed to have seen Eglinton actually writing on the slates with his own hands, the writing being afterwards exhibited by him as the work of spirits. The most complete record of the kind is that of Professor Carvill Lewis, F.G.S., who had two sittings in the winter of 1886.[3] By purposely turning his head away and pretending to divert his attention, Professor Lewis was able not only to hear Eglinton's doings as he wrote on the slates, unrolled a piece of paper on which a question was written, etc., but occasionally to see the movements of the tendons of the wrist in the act of writing, and other signs of muscular

[1] See *Journal S. P. R.*, June, 1886; *Medium and Daybreak*, 1st and 15th Nov., 1878; and *Spiritualist*, 14th Feb. 1879, p. 83, and 21st March, 1879, p. 135.

[2] See *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iii. p. 254, and *Journal S. P. R.*, June, 1886, p. 284.

[3] See his report, in *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. pp. 352, etc.

action on his part necessary for the performance of the trick.

But demonstration of occasional, or even frequent, trickery was not in itself sufficient. As already said, educated Spiritualists have, at least in the later years of the movement, been willing to admit sporadic trickery on the part of genuine mediums. One of the most acute and most candid of those who have professed their belief in the physical phenomena, Mr. C. C. Massey,[1] has put this contention in a form to which no exception can reasonably be taken. "As Eduard von Hartmann has pointed out," he writes, "occasional trickery is antecedently to be expected from the exigencies of professional mediumship, having regard to the uncertainty with which the true force is developed. And the whole theory of mediumship points to influences and conditions which must result sometimes in actual deception, sometimes in the mere appearance of it."[2] Even more striking is the testimony to the same effect of the well-known conjurer, "Professor Hoffmann" (Mr. Angelo J. Lewis). Professor Hoffmann was requested by the S.P.R. to report in his professional capacity upon Eglinton's performance. After attending twelve sittings (mostly blank) and studying the reports furnished by others, he pointed out many circumstances suggesting that trickery was occasionally, if not even systematically, employed. "On the other hand," he writes, "I do not believe the cleverest conjurer could, under the same conditions, use trickery in the wholesale way necessary to produce all these phenomena without exposing himself to constant risk of detection. . . . If conjuring were the only explanation of the slate-writing phenomena, I should certainly have expected that their secret would long since have become public property."[3]

Mr. C. C. Massey, in the article from which I have already quoted, puts the Spiritualist case at its strongest. The best mediumistic manifestations, he contends, are not comparable in their conditions to the performances of conjurers. The success of the conjurer depends upon his being able to dictate his own conditions, and upon the ignorance of the spectators of the result to be expected, and hence of the exact point or process which they have to observe. It is

[1] Mr. Massey, it should be pointed out, is not a Spiritualist in the strict sense of the term, *i.e.* he does not believe that such phenomena as slate-writing necessarily involve any other agency than the psychic force of the medium.

[2] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. p. 94.

[3] *Journal S. P. R.*, Aug., 1886, p. 373.

because of this ignorance that the conjurer finds it so easy to divert attention from the movements essential to the success of the trick. At a mediumistic séance conducted by competent investigators, and especially, Mr. Massey claims, at a slate-writing séance, the investigators can dictate their own conditions; they consequently know beforehand exactly what they have to observe, and where to concentrate their attention. By well-contrived precautions, in fact, the task of observation can be reduced to "a single fact of sense-perception, or at most, to two or three such facts well within an average capacity of simultaneous or successive attention."[1] The things to be observed at a séance for slate-writing—such is the Spiritualists' contention—are so easy, the precautions to be taken are so simple, that a sane witness cannot be mistaken when he states that he did observe such facts, or did take such precautions. If we refuse to accept the testimony of such a witness, the refusal must logically imply that we think him dishonest, or that we think him imbecile. As an instance of the kind of testimony which imposes upon those who reject it the responsibility of choosing between these alternatives, Mr. Massey cites the following record of his own, written out on the evening of the day on which the sitting took place. Besides Mr. Massey and the medium the only other person present was the Hon. Roden Noel, who corroborates Mr. Massey's account:—

"Mr. Eglinton now laid one of two equal-sized slates ($10\frac{5}{8}$ inches by $7\frac{5}{8}$) flat upon the other, the usual scrap of pencil being enclosed. *Both* slates were then, *as I carefully assured myself*, perfectly clean on *both* surfaces. He then *forthwith, and without any previous dealing with them*, presented one end of the two slates, held together by himself at the other end, for me to hold with my left hand, on which he placed his own right. I clasped the slates, my thumb on the frame of the one ($\frac{5}{8}$-inch), and three of my fingers, reaching about four inches, forcing up the lower slate against the upper one. We did not hold the slates underneath the table, but at the side a little below the level. Mr. Noel was thus able to observe the position. Mr. Eglinton held the slates firmly together at his end, as I can assert, because I particularly observed that there was no gap at his end. I also noticed his thumb on the top of the slates, and can say that it rested quite quietly throughout the writing, *which we heard almost immediately*, and continuously, except when Mr. Eglinton once raised his hand from mine, when the sound ceased till contact was resumed.

"We heard the sound of writing distinctly, yet it was not, I think,

[1] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. p. 77.

quite so loudly audible as I remember with Slade. When the three taps came, denoting that the 'message' was finished, *Eglinton simply removed his hand from the slates, leaving them in my left hand*, also quitting contact of his other hand with my left. I took off the upper slate, and we saw that the inner surface of one of them was covered with writing, 20 lines (118 words), from end to end written *from* the medium, and one line along the side by the frame, and 'good-bye' on the other side. The writing was in straight lines across the slate, all the lines slanting from left to right."[1]

We may agree with Mr. Massey that the long message was probably not written by the medium whilst the slate was held in the manner described. And probably not only to Mr. Massey himself, to Mr. Hensleigh Wedgwood,[2] and other typical Spiritualists, but even to most of those more sceptical outsiders who were then engaged on a critical investigation of the subject, the task demanded of the sitter's faculty of attention may well have seemed absurdly easy. We may agree to put aside the possibility of trick-slates having been used—not because such slates were excluded by the conditions of the experiment, for Eglinton's own slates were used, and Eglinton himself placed the slates in position—but because from what we know of Eglinton's methods it seems unlikely that he would have exposed himself to the serious risk of detection which would have been involved in his possession of trick-slates of the kind required. Of the three assumptions—that so shrewd an observer as Mr. Massey had been mistaken in his definite statement that both surfaces of both slates were clean prior to the experiment; that the word "forthwith" covered an interval of time and movements on the part of the medium which gave him the opportunity of substituting a prepared slate; or that the late Mr. Roden Noel was a black magician—the last would to many of us at that time, and certainly to the present writer, have seemed hardly the most extravagant. That the two first suppositions are now seen to be not only possible, but actually to involve no high degree of improbability, is due mainly to the critical work done by Dr. Hodgson, and the admirable pseudo-mediumship of the late S. J. Davey.

The prime defect in the evidence for the physical phenomena

[1] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. pp. 87, 88.

[2] "The facts are of so simple a nature that they could as well be observed by any ordinary intelligence as by the most scientific member of the Society for Psychical Research."—Mr. Hensleigh Wedgwood, in the *Journal S. P. R.*, Nov., 1886, p. 457.

of Spiritualism pointed out in the preceding chapter, to wit, that so far it has rested exclusively on experiments demanding continuous observation from the investigators, and that all attempts made to dispense with this condition have ended in failure, receives further illustration from the history of slate-writing. Thus, though the trial has frequently been made, no observers have yet succeeded in obtaining writing on slates absolutely secure—*e.g.* by adequate sealing, or by being enclosed in glass or wire-gauze—against interference.[1] But to meet Mr. Massey's contention that, in a matter so simple as slate-writing, observation, even untrained observation, could hardly be at fault, the argument was now carried a step further. We are all aware how different will be the accounts of a conjuring trick given by one who knows the trick and one who does not. Dr. Hodgson gives a striking illustration of this. He had once watched a juggler in India performing a well-known piece of legerdemain. Seated on the ground with his legs crossed, he caused some small figures and coins, which were lying about two feet from him, to dance and jump about. One of the spectators, an English officer, drew a coin from his pocket, which, on being placed on the ground with the others, displayed like activity. In describing this incident that same evening, in Dr. Hodgson's presence, the officer stated that he took the coin from his pocket and himself placed it on the ground, and he was naturally much amazed at the agility which, without apparent cause, it straightway displayed. But Dr. Hodgson had seen that the officer's intended action had been baulked of execution by the juggler himself, who leant forward and took the coin from its owner's hand before it reached the ground. In that unobtrusive movement lay, of course, the possibility of the trick. Here, it will be seen, a perfectly honest witness asserted—possibly, as Dr. Hodgson suggests, through mistaking his own imagination of the act intended for the memory of an act actually performed—that he had taken a definite precaution, which, as a matter of fact, he had not taken. But an isolated trick of a wandering juggler makes a far smaller demand upon the powers of observation than the events of a slate-writing séance, lasting perhaps a couple of hours. To observe and record the whole course of such a

[1] See Mrs. Sidgwick's article on the "Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism" (*Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. pp. 70–2). The Seybert Commission made numerous attempts to obtain writing on sealed slates, but in each instance the experiment was either declined by the medium or remained barren of results (*Report*, pp. 17, 27, 49, 66, etc.).

to interview a visitor or receive a message; that he habitually dropped the slate on the floor; that he was subject to a distressing cold in the head, which betrayed itself now by a sneeze, now by a cough, now by the exhibition of his handkerchief; that he was restless, and frequently changed the position of his limbs, and especially of his hands. It further appeared that many of the sitters, intent upon higher things, or merely mindful of the dictates of good breeding, habitually ignored such trivial and irrelevant episodes. But in these seemingly insignificant happenings lay, it need hardly be said, the secret of Eglinton's success. A sneeze or a cough would drown the snap of a spring lock, or the rustle of an unfolded paper; a change of hand would cover a change in the position of the slate; dropping it on the floor would give the opportunity for substitution; and leaving the room would admit of the writing of a message or a hurried glance at an encyclopædia.[1] But to attempt to show in detail how the results were, or could have been, attained, would be tedious and unnecessary. It will be more profitable to follow Dr. Hodgson's analysis of a single case.

On June 11th, 1885, Mr. G. A. Smith and Mr. J. Murray Templeton had a sitting with Eglinton. This is an account of one of the most striking incidents of the séance taken from Mr. Smith's record, which was written on the following day:—

"We now expressed our desire to get something written which could be regarded as outside the knowledge of any of us—such as a certain word on a given line of a chosen page of a book. . . .

"I then went to the bookshelf, took a book at haphazard, without, of course, looking at the title, returned to my seat, placed the book upon the chair, and sat upon it whilst we were arranging the page, line, and word to be asked for. This point Mr. Templeton and I decided by each taking a few crayons and pencils from the table by chance, and counting them; Mr. Templeton had possessed himself of eighteen pieces of crayon, and I had seized nine pieces of pencil, we found on counting them. We therefore decided that the 'controls' should be asked to write the *last word* of *line* 18 on *page* 9 of the book. This article I now produced, and laid it upon one of my slates, and Mr. Eglinton held the two close beneath the underneath of the table—the book, of course, being held firmly closed between the table and the slate. We then commenced conversing; in the midst of Mr. Eglinton's own remarks the writing was heard to

[1] Sometimes too hurried, as in the case cited by Professor Carvill Lewis, when the spirits after Mr. Eglinton's return from one of these brief absences gave *Albumina* (instead of Alumina), as one of the constituents of the mineral Idocrase (*Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. p. 355).

commence. For about twenty-five seconds he was talking, and the writing continued a few more seconds before the three taps came indicating its conclusion. The message we found was as follows: 'This is a Hungarian book of poems. The last word of page 18 (page 9, line 18) is bunhoseded.'

"After we had observed that a mistake in the figures had been corrected in parenthesis, I opened the book at page 9, and we found that the last word on line 18 of that page was 'bunhodesed.'"

The word, it will be seen, was accurately given with the exception of the transposition of two letters; and we are almost inclined to agree with Mr. Smith's comment:—

"As a test experiment I think this may be regarded as a very successful and crucial one; for it is difficult to believe that Mr. Eglinton can have committed to memory the exact position of every word in every book on his bookshelves—containing some two hundred books, or more."

We are so inclined, that is, until we have read Mr. Templeton's version of the same incident:—

"Next, the final and most crucial test was proposed by Mr. Eglinton. It had been suggested to his own mind by a former test of my own, in which I had wished to preclude all possibility of any explanation such as thought-transference. We arranged that Mr. Smith should turn to the bookshelves behind him, choose a book at random, in which we could fix upon a certain word in a certain line of a given page—which word was to be written for us. On taking a book, Mr. Smith asked Mr. Eglinton if he knew what it was. Mr. Eglinton answered 'Yes,' and that as it was a rather trashy novel, it might be better to choose another. Mr. Smith then took a small red-covered book from the opposite shelf, and this Mr. Eglinton said he did not recognise. As the theory of the medium's mesmeric influence over the sitters had been more than once put before me as a not impossible explanation, I suggested we should fix the line by the number of crayons in a box before us, which gave us the eighteenth line; and in a similar way, from a separate heap of slate pencils, we obtained the number 9 for page. The last word in the line was chosen."

From Mr. Templeton's version it would appear (1) that the test was proposed by Eglinton himself; (2) that the book was not chosen entirely "at haphazard"; (3) that the line and page were determined, not by taking at random a handful [illegible] from larger heaps, but by taking the [illegible] present on the table. From [illegible] it would have appeared that

the success of the experiment depended on Eglinton's being able to open and read the book, and afterwards write down the word selected, whilst the book was actually being held under the table. That Eglinton did occasionally perform this trick—a favourite one at his séances—in this manner appears from the account by Professor Carvill Lewis, already referred to. But from Mr. Templeton's version it would seem at least equally probable that on this occasion the slate was prepared beforehand; that Mr. Smith's hand was guided to the red-covered book of his second choice by direction which he could not see;[1] and that the seeming chance-medley of pencils and crayons co-operated to the same predestined end.[2]

The effect produced by Dr. Hodgson's analysis was limited, however, by two considerations. In the first place, the amount of material for analysis was comparatively small. To reach its highest effectiveness the method required two independent accounts of the same séance, written by persons whose powers of observation varied. There can unfortunately be little doubt that with most of Eglinton's sitters the powers of observation showed similar deficiencies, not necessarily to a like degree, but certainly in the same particulars. Probably every conjurer's success depends on his ability to induce most persons on most occasions to overlook or forget the crucial incidents of the performance. It is matter for congratulation that even under such conditions Dr. Hodgson was able to demonstrate such numerous and important discrepancies. Again, it was open to those Spiritualists who championed the genuineness of the phenomena to claim that their own observations were free from these evidential defects, and that in any case the mere demonstration of minor discrepancies in the accounts given by some observers was not sufficient to prove that the results were in all cases due to trickery.

But if by means of pure legerdemain slate-writing and all the other phenomena of Eglinton's séances could be successfully produced, and produced under the same conditions, the proof of fraud might be held complete. Such proof had, indeed, been furnished in America some years previously by

[1] In *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. viii. pp. 268–70, Dr. Hodgson describes the methods actually employed by Mr. Davey in "forcing" a book on the sitter for the purpose of this trick.

[2] I should perhaps state that I have known Mr. Smith for many years; that antecedently to this exhibition I should have described him as possessing powers of observation decidedly superior to those possessed by the average attendant at Spiritualistic séances, and that I am of the same opinion still.

Mr. J. W. Truesdell, as described in his *Bottom Facts of Spiritualism*.[1] At a séance with Slade Mr. Truesdell had detected the medium's foot in simulating the touch of a spirit hand; he had also discovered, before the séance began, a slate with a prepared message; had stealthily added another message of his own—"Henry, look out for this fellow; he is up to snuff.—Alcinda" (Alcinda being the name of Slade's "spirit wife"); and had enjoyed Slade's discomfiture when, at the appropriate moment of the séance, the unrehearsed message came to light. Thereafter Truesdell had given sittings on his own account; had written messages on the sitter's own slate in the full light, the messages being written in the handwriting of deceased friends and reproducing facts buried in the sitter's consciousness. How those marvels were accomplished Truesdell tells us in his book.

Amongst those who had been most impressed by Eglinton's performances was an associate of the S.P.R., the late Mr. S. J. Davey, to whose reports of his early séances with that medium reference has already been made. Davey soon, however, noticed suspicious movements on the medium's part, found out that he was being tricked, and thereafter, with practice, succeeded in imitating the slate-writing performance. Realising the importance of systematic experiment on the subject, Davey placed himself in the hands of the Society, and with Dr. Hodgson as "manager," came out as a quasi-professional conjurer, adopting an assumed name.[2] Davey worked, indeed, under one great disadvantage as compared with Eglinton. Probably nearly all those who gave testimony in favour of the medium had gone to the séance with some expectation that they might witness a genuine display of occult powers. "Professor Hoffmann," we have seen, half believed in the occult powers even after a course of twelve séances. Now an expectation of this kind, even if present only in a comparatively faint degree, unquestionably tells in favour of the performer. It was found possible, without actual false statements, or an appeal to emotions which would have been hardly less repulsive, maintain any such mystical atmosphere about Mr. Davey. therefore probable that those who attended his perces were in a more critical mood than most of n's clients. In some cases they were definitely told and that they were to witness simply a conjuring

York, 1883.

r's performance was, of course, entirely gratuitous; he received no ney from the Society or from his "sitters."

display; this was the case in the one séance with Davey which I personally attended. He came to my rooms one evening in the summer of 1886 and offered to give a séance, not to me—believing, though, I am satisfied, without justification, that I should detect the *modus operandi*—but to my brother. Mr. A. Podmore understood that he was merely to see some conjuring. This is his account of the matter, not written, unfortunately, until a few weeks after the incident:—

"*July*, 1886.

"A few weeks ago Mr. D. gave me a séance, and, to the best of my recollection, the following was the result. Mr. D. gave me an ordinary school slate, which I held at one end, he at the other, with our left hands; he then produced a double slate, hinged and locked. Without removing my left hand, I unlocked the slate, and at Mr. D's direction placed three small pieces of chalk—red, green, and grey—inside. I then relocked the slate, placed the key in my pocket, and the slate on the table in such a position that I could easily watch both the slate in my left hand and the other on the table. After some few minutes, during which, to the best of my belief, I was attentively regarding *both* slates, Mr. D. whisked the first away, and showed me on the reverse a message written to myself. Almost immediately afterwards he asked me to unlock the second slate, and on doing so I found to my intense astonishment another message written on both the insides of the slate—the lines in alternate colours and the chalks apparently much worn by usage.

"My brother tells me that there was an interval of some two or three minutes, during which my attention was called away, but I can only believe it on his word. AUSTIN PODMORE."[1]

Mr. Davey allowed me to see exactly what was done, and this is what I saw. The "almost immediately" in the above account covered an interval of some minutes. During this interval, and, indeed, throughout the séance, Davey kept up a constant stream of chatter, on matters more or less germane to the business in hand. Mr. A. Podmore, absorbed by the conjurer's patter, fixed his eyes on Davey's face, and the latter took advantage of the opportunity to remove the locked slate under cover of a duster from under my brother's nose to the far end of the room, and there exchange it for a similar slate, with a previously prepared message, which was then placed by means of the same manœuvre with the duster in the position originally occupied by the first slate. Then,

[1] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. p. 416.

and only then, the stream of talk slackened, and Mr. A. Podmore's attention became concentrated upon the slate, from which the sound of spirit-writing was now heard to proceed.[1] To me the most surprising thing in the whole episode was Mr. A. Podmore's incredulity when told that his attention had been diverted from the slate for an appreciable period.

Of many similar records one more may perhaps be quoted. The following account is selected, not because the experiment was unusually successful, since Davey at many of his séances carried out the "test" of reproducing a passage from a book selected by the sitter, but because the sitter, Mr. J. M. Dodds, was of all Mr. Davey's sitters perhaps the most acute and the most sceptical.

Mr. Dodds writes that after some preliminary experiments he was invited to choose mentally from the books lining the room (about a thousand in number) "any one with a clear title," to select a page and line by means of two random handfuls of slate-pencil, and then to wait whilst the pencil between the locked slates wrote the line indicated. Mr. Dodds explains that he did not touch the book mentally chosen, and was careful to give no indication of his choice. Nothing happened for some time. Then, he continues:—

"After a short rest it was suggested that I should name the book, and that the experiment should be resumed in a modified form. The problem was now: Given a certain book, viz. *Taine on Intelligence*, required to be written in a blank, locked slate, lying under our hands, a quotation unknown to anyone present, taken from a page and line known only to myself. The book, of course, remained untouched on the shelf. We sat as before, with the slate under our hands and eyes. I concentrated my thoughts. Mr. Davey soon appeared to reach a high pitch of exaltation; his arms and body became subject to a violent *frissonnement*. He again appealed to his ghostly helpers, and on this occasion his efforts were rewarded, for, in a few minutes, to my utter amazement—Mr. Davey's hands and your own[2] being well in sight and unemployed—I heard sounds of writing within the slate, which continued for half a minute or more. On unlocking the slate I found, legibly written, a quota-

[1] One of the most successful devices of the medium to divert attention from his *modus operandi* is the imitation of the sound of writing. The real writing was, it need hardly be said, alike by the medium and the pseudo-medium, either prepared beforehand or produced noiselessly at a moment when the sitter's attention was given to other matters. The "sound of writing," on which the Spiritualist writers lay so much stress, never probably coincided with the actual writing: it generally took place after the whole trick was safely accomplished. [illegible] served its purpose.

[2] [illegible]'s, to whom the account was furnished.

tion, almost, but not quite, verbally correct, from page 15 of Taine's book, beginning at the eighth line. Some "clear-obscure" remarks, which I at once interpreted as relating to a friend of mine, followed.

"I had thought of the eighth line of the twenty-eighth page. The correspondence was, therefore, not exact, the line only being correct. What struck me, however, was not the coincidence of the quotation, nor the gibberish about my friend, which hinted information easily ascertainable by anyone who, like Mr. Davey, had met him—it was the occurrence of what the evidence of my senses told me was writing by a piece of inanimate pencil inside a locked slate, with no conceivable means of explanation! For a moment I confess I was completely staggered; my notions of causation were turned topsy-turvy; visions of 'magnetic force' and 'occult action' danced before my brain."[1]

In this case, of course, the writing on the slate had been prepared beforehand, and the book was "forced" on Mr. Dodds. I have watched Mr. Davey arrange the books in a bookshelf of my own in order to "force" some particular volume upon the sitter. If the conjurer is allowed—as we have already seen the spirit medium is allowed—a certain liberty in rejecting unsuitable books, the "forcing" of a book under such conditions is a feat which presents a fair chance of success, and which, of course, when successful, creates a profound impression.

Space will not, unfortunately, permit of further descriptions of Mr. Davey's marvels. The events of some twenty sittings, attested in many cases by more than one witness, are given at length in the *Proceedings S. P. R.*[2] It is enough to say that by the general testimony of those who witnessed his performances he rivalled, if he did not actually surpass, the most astonishing feats recorded of Slade, Eglinton, and all their tribe. He habitually produced "spirit" writing on the sitter's own slate; he wrote messages in double slates securely screwed together and sealed; in locked slates of which the sitter held the key; on slates brought to the séance carefully wrapped in brown paper and tied with string, the fastenings remaining apparently intact at the end of the experiment; he wrote messages in colours—green, blue, red, or white—chosen beforehand by the sitter; he wrote long answers on subjects selected by the sitter; passages from books taken by the sitter from the shelves, sometimes giving even the correct line and page. He wrote in German and Spanish for students of those languages; he gave an Oriental sitter

[1] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. p. 460. [2] Vol. iv. pp. 416–87.

the Persian spelling of his own name; he exhibited a long message in Japanese for a Japanese marquis. He wrote down numbers in response to the sitter's mental request; and gave details of private family history. He made a tumbler walk across the table under the full glare of the gas; and small pieces of chalk to move of themselves and describe geometrical figures at the unexpressed wish of the investigator. At his dark séances musical boxes floated round the room, raps were heard, cold hands felt; the figures of a woman and a bearded man in a turban mysteriously appeared and saluted the company. And of none of these marvels could the witnesses find any plausible explanation, so much so that more than one found himself forced to invoke the mysterious agency of magnetism, electricity, or pneumatics.

For Mr. Davey enjoyed to the full that immunity from exposure which is claimed by Spiritualists, and regarded even by some conjurers, as evidence for the exercise by mediums of supernormal powers.[1] Davey, with one doubtful exception, was never detected in trickery by any of his sitters.[2] But, in fact, as he himself pointed out,[3] and as we have already seen in the case of Professor Lankester's attempted exposure of Slade, it is by no means easy to convict a slate-writing medium of trickery. If he dreads the acumen of his sitter, he can always give a blank séance, a privilege of which Eglinton freely availed himself in his sittings with many members of the S.P.R. And these same blank sittings, it should be noted, were often quoted in Eglinton's favour by his admirers, on the assumption that a conjurer could not venture to fail. Even if the medium entertains an expert unawares, the expert will find it difficult—at the first sitting, at any rate—to do more than conjecture how the thing is done. The discovery of a prematurely written message can always be passed off as a communication produced noiselessly by the spirits without the knowledge of medium or sitter. Even if the medium is seen writing and caught, as Slade

th the message half finished, the proof is not of an
ing kind, and, as we have already seen, carries
y to those open to be convinced. For there
at evidence of guilt, as in the materialisation
preme excellence of slate-writing, from the

[1] ready quoted from Professor Hoffmann's report.
erred to—the premature discovery of a slate with a written
nd at the end of Mr. Dodds' report. But even here,
out (*Proc.*, vol. iv. p. 493), a professional medium would
not difficult to satisfy his sitters that the writing was a
.

[3] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv. p. 410.

medium's standpoint, is that at its best it requires little trick apparatus, and that little of simple character and trifling bulk. The medium has little to fear, because he has little to conceal.[1]

It is hardly necessary to point the obvious moral. In the last chapter we learnt something of the treachery that lies in the dark séance, and the blind guidance of the sense of touch. From the present study we may gather indications of the less obvious and to many persons still incredible shortcomings of the most trusted and least untrustworthy of our senses. The untrained eye is no match for the trained hand of the conjurer. The kind of observation demanded of the investigators at a spiritualistic séance—an observation which is alive to the various artifices employed to distract it, and which, if not actually unremitting, is at least aware of its own lapses—is a quality not called for and not exercised in the investigations of the physical laboratory, and not to be acquired, even to a moderate extent, except by education of a very special kind. As we have seen, even professional

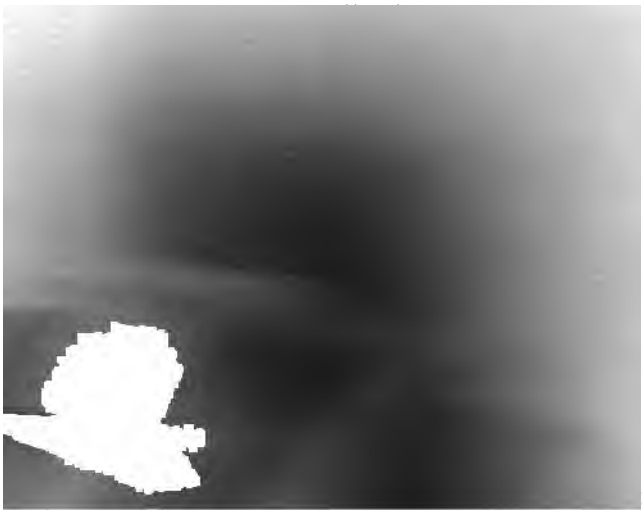
[1] A full description of the methods employed by Mr. Davey will be found in the notes contributed by himself and Dr. Hodgson to the reports of séances given in *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. iv., and in the article by Dr. Hodgson, "Mr. Davey's Imitation by Conjuring of Phenomena sometimes attributed to Spirit Agency" (*Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. viii. pp. 253–310). Most of Mr. Davey's slate-writing was produced in one or other of two ways. Either (1), as in the two cases cited in the text, he substituted a slate with a message already written for the slate which the sitter had carefully cleaned and believed himself to have guarded intact. This was the method commonly employed for the production of long messages of a general character. Or (2) he would write noiselessly on the under side of a slate whilst it was actually being held under the table by the hands of the sitter and himself. In the latter case the writing would be produced by means of a fragment of pencil, fixed in a thimble, which he had slipped, unobserved, on one of his fingers. When the writing was completed an opportunity would be found for reversing the slate and bringing the written side uppermost. This naturally was the method used for producing relevant answers to the questions asked by the sitters. Mr. Davey rarely used trick slates, preferring to trust for his effects to sleight of hand. From Dr. Hodgson's analysis it would seem probable that the methods employed by Eglinton were closely similar to those described. But, of course, in the case of both performers the actual procedure was necessarily varied to meet the requirements of the moment, and Davey was specially skilful in taking advantage of any unsought opportunities which offered themselves.

Professional slate-writers, especially in America, whose sitters are for the most part less critical than those who attended Davey's séances, employ numerous devices: trick slates with loose flaps; removable coverings of slate-coloured silk; locked slates with sliding hinges; revolving surfaces covered with slate-coloured silicate paint; mirrors; trick tables; trap-doors in floor, table, door, etc., etc. Sympathetic inks may also be used to produce the writing. The best description of the various tricks employed by professional slate-writers will be found in a recent book, *Spirit Slate-writing and Kindred Phenomena*, by W. E. Robinson (New York and London, 1899). See also the *Seybert Report*, and an article in the *Journal S. P. R.* for January, 1901, by the Rev. Stanley Krebs, describing some slate-writing séances with the Bangs sisters in Chicago.

conjurers may prove deficient in this special qualification. The labours of Mr. Davey and Dr. Hodgson should compel us to admit that no evidence for the so-called "physical" phenomena of Spiritualism can be regarded as satisfactory, which at any point depends upon continuous observation on the part of the investigator.

It remains to add that Mr. Davey's consummate art earned the last tribute that its admirers could bestow—he was claimed by Spiritualists as a renegade medium.[1]

[1] "Unless all (Mr. Davey's performances) can be so explained, many of us will be confirmed in our belief that Mr. Davey was really a medium as well as a conjurer, and that in imputing all his performances to 'trick' he was deceiving the Society and the public."—Letter from Dr. A. R. Wallace, F.R.S., printed in the *Journal S. P. R.*, March, 1891.



CHAPTER III

DANIEL DUNGLAS HOME

WE have seen in the last chapter how a juggler, aided by the mystery which surrounds a medium, and knowing how to take advantage of the infirmities to which human observation and testimony are liable, could mislead even experts into the belief that his tricks were due to powers beyond those of ordinary humanity. Now we have no reason to credit Eglinton with any peculiar aptitude for the profession which he had chosen. Such eminence as he attained seems to have been due as much to good fortune as to any special skill or astuteness of his own. He was, in fact, an impostor of a sufficiently commonplace type. We have now to consider a medium of another kind. Charlatan and adventurer, helpless sport of superhuman forces, or chosen emissary of the spirit-world, commonplace is the last epithet that could justly be applied to Daniel Dunglas Home. Whatever the explanation of the feats ascribed to him—and they are more varied, more striking, and better attested than any others in the history of the marvellous—it does not lie on the surface. In Home and in his doings all the problems of Spiritualism are posed in their acutest form; with the marvels wrought by or through him the main defences of Spiritualism must stand or fall.

Daniel Dunglas Home, or Hume, was, by his own account, born near Edinburgh in 1833.[1] Neither in his original auto-

[1] The materials for an account of Home's life and mediumship are extremely abundant. There are, in the first place, his own writings, of which the chief are the two volumes of *Incidents in My Life* (First Series, 1863; Second Series, 1872) and the *Lights and Shadows of Spiritualism*, 1877. There are two works by Madame Home (the second wife), *D. D. Home; his Life and Mission*, 1888, and *The Gift of D. D. Home*, 1890.

Of other documents, the most important are *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, by W. Crookes, F.R.S., 1874 (a reprint of various articles which had appeared in the *Quarterly Journal of Science*), and *Notes of Stances with D. D. Home*, by the same author, published in the *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. vi. pp. 98–127; a privately circulated volume entitled *Experiences in Spiritualism*,

biography nor in the two biographical accounts written by his second wife is there any express mention of his father, and this omission, coupled with his own statement that he was adopted at an early age by his mother's sister, affords strong confirmation of the rumour that his birth was illegitimate.[1]

When Home was nine years old he appears to have been taken by his aunt to America, and to have lived with her and her husband until the end of 1850. Then the rapping epidemic which had broken out in Hydesville two years previously infected young Home, and he left his aunt's house and went out into the world. For the next five years he stayed in one household or another in New York and elsewhere, giving séances and apparently receiving hospitality and some measure of education in return. It does not appear that at this or any other period he ever accepted any definite payment in money for his services as a medium. Amongst those who attended his séances at this period were the poet

by Viscount Adare (the present Earl of Dunraven), with a preface by the late Earl, containing an account of seventy-eight séances held in the years 1867–8; the evidence included in the Dialectical Society's *Report;* the affidavits given at the trial Lyon *v.* Home in 1868; *Evenings with Mr. Home and the Spirits*, by Dr. J. G. Wilkinson, 1855; *Spirit Manifestations*, by J. Snaith Rymer, 1857; *Spiritualism: a Narrative with a Discussion*, by Patrick Proctor Alexander, Edinburgh, 1871; the correspondence in the *Morning Advertiser* (London) in October and November, 1855; and numerous articles in the Spiritualist Press, especially the *Spiritual Telegraph* (New York); the *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph* (Keighley), 1855–7; the *Spiritual Herald* (London), 1856; the *Spiritual Magazine*, 1860 and onwards; and *Human Nature*, 1867 and onwards. There are also references to Home in Hare's book on *The Spirit Manifestations*, New York, 1855; Cox's *The Mechanism of Man*, London, 1876; in Spicer's *Sights and Sounds*, 1853; and in many other works on Spiritualism. The *Journal* of the Society for Psychical Research for July, 1889, and May, 1890, contains some valuable additional evidence collected by the late F. W. H. Myers. Further, Mr. Myers was allowed by Madame Home to inspect the original letters and documents which are quoted in that lady's *Life* of her husband, and was able to satisfy himself, by his knowledge of the writing in some cases, and by other indications, that the letters are genuine and that they are accurately reproduced in the book.

Some of the facts given in the text as to Home's personal characteristics and manner of life are derived from information supplied to me by persons who had
- Of these I desire especially to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr.
-o was kind enough to give me orally copious details of his
Home, and subsequently to correct and supplement my
versation. No one living is probably better qualified
on Home's early life; Mr. Ogden and Professor Bush,
Home in New York prior to his departure for England
Ir. Perdicaris' family. He was also intimately acquainted
nany of Home's circle of friends in this country, and
ertook the expense of educating Home's young son.
Incidents (Second Series, p. 48), Home states that
-n of Alexander tenth Earl of Home. No proof

Bryant, Ward Cheney, Bishop Clark of Rhode Island, Rufus Elmer, S. B. Brittan (editor of the *Shekinah* and the *New York Spiritual Telegraph*), Judge Edmonds, Professor Bush, Mr. Ogden, and Mr. J. W. Carrington. The three gentlemen last named were in 1855 members of a small committee who subscribed a sum of money to send Home over to Europe, partly for the benefit of his health, partly, it would seem, as a missionary of Spiritualism.

Home arrived in England in the spring of 1855 and went to stay at Cox's Hotel in Jermyn Street, having brought introductions to the proprietor, a man of scientific tastes, from his friends in New York. He spent the spring and summer of this year as a guest, now of Mr. Cox, now of Mr. J. S. Rymer, a solicitor, at his house at Ealing, and gave numerous séances, Lord Brougham, Sir D. Brewster, Robert Owen, T. A. Trollope, Sir E. Bulwer Lytton, Dr. J. Garth Wilkinson and others being amongst the privileged witnesses.

In the autumn of this year he went to Italy, and spent the next few years on the Continent, quartered apparently for the whole period on various friends, mostly persons of rank and wealth, and repaying the hospitality which he received by the exercise of his marvellous powers. He was summoned during this period on several occasions to the Tuileries, to hold sittings with the Emperor and Empress; he also performed before the Czar of Russia and many other royal and noble personages. In the autumn of 1859 he returned to this country, bringing with him a young and charming wife, the daughter of a noble Russian family, and possessed of a moderate fortune. An account of his mediumship at this period will be found in the article written by Robert Bell, which appeared in the *Cornhill* in August, 1860.[1] For the next ten or twelve years Home seems to have resided chiefly in London, with intervals more or less prolonged spent upon the Continent. In 1862 his wife died; and Home, who appears to have been left in somewhat straitened circumstances, was forced to eke out his means by giving public lectures and recitations. In 1866 a new society, the "Spiritual Athenæum," was founded by his numerous friends, mainly in order to give Home, as salaried secretary, a fixed position and a livelihood. In the autumn of the same year he made the acquaintance of a wealthy and childless widow, Mrs. Lyon. Mrs. Lyon professed her desire to adopt Home, and presented him "as a free gift" with a sum of £24,000, following this up with still further

[1] See above, pp. 48–50.

benefactions. Home in return took the name of Home-Lyon. In the course of a few months Mrs. Lyon changed her mind, and desired to revoke her gifts. The matter came into court in April, 1868, the case being noteworthy from the Spiritualist standpoint because of the large number of affidavits filed by persons of distinction testifying to the reality of Home's power. No definite charge of fraud or illicit influence was proved against Home: but the court was not satisfied that Mrs. Lyon's gifts were "acts of pure volition uninfluenced," and judgment was given in her favour.[1]

In the years 1870–2 Home gave a long series of sittings to Mr. (now Sir William) Crookes. In the autumn of 1871 he had married for the second time, his wife being again a Russian lady possessed of some fortune. Shortly after this event Home seems to have broken with nearly all his friends in this country, and to have exercised his mediumship more and more rarely. He spent the rest of his life mostly on the Continent, and died after a long and painful illness in June, 1886, the immediate cause of death being pneumonia.

This brief sketch of Home's career, founded as it is, as regards the earlier years, mainly on material written or inspired by Home himself, needs a critical supplement. It seems certain that Home began life in extreme poverty, and probably as an illegitimate child. From the age of seventeen onwards he lived by the exercise of his mediumship, none the less if he never actually received payment in cash down. Throughout his life, first in the Eastern States of America and later in every country of Europe, he found wealthy patrons to welcome him to their homes, and lavish their hospitality on him. Such formal education as he received in his youth was paid for by the New York committee to which I have alluded. When Home was not actually a guest in their houses, his patrons, in one way or other—by taking tickets for his lectures, by commissioning busts from him, by subscribing to pay his debts, by making him presents of costly jewellery — managed to provide for his wants. Mr. Perdicaris for some years undertook the charge of educating his only son. Home thus lived not merely in comfort, but—a thing which to a man of his temperament was probably not less an object of desire—he lived in what is commonly called the "best" society, the society of persons of rank, wealth, and fashion, and occasionally of intellectual distinction.

[1] See the analysis of the proceedings by Mr. H. Arthur Smith, author of *Principles of Equity*, in the *Journal S. P. R.* for July, 1889.

It is to be noted that when Home first came to England he changed his name. Prior to that period it had been spelt Hume. Possibly the explanation of the change may be found in the claim already referred to, of kinship with the Earl of Home.[1]

Two other curious features in Home's career should be recorded as having some possible significance in their bearing on his character. Early in February, 1856, according to his own account, after due warning from his spirit guides, Home's mediumistic powers left him. Shortly afterwards he was received into the Church of Rome. He had an audience with the Pope, and was even at one time, as Madame Home tells us, on the point of joining a monastic order. He drew back, however, and in February of the following year, being then at Paris, he resumed his mediumistic performance, on the occasion of an invitation from the Tuileries.[2]

In December, 1855, shortly before the intermission of his powers, Home, returning at night through the streets of Florence, reported himself to have been attacked by a man who struck at him with a dagger, and succeeded only in inflicting a slight flesh wound.[3] Thirteen years later, at the time of the trial Lyon *v.* Home, the drama was repeated, but on a stage, it must be admitted, less happily chosen. The midnight assassin and the murderous stiletto may pass for topical melodrama in Italy, but they degenerate into farce when the theatre is Jermyn Street. Home, it remains to be said, in London as in Florence, was unaccompanied at the time of the outrage: the wound was on each occasion happily trivial, and the perpetrator was never discovered.[4]

In person Home is described as having been slight, fair, and, without being actually handsome, attractive and even distinguished-looking. A portrait of him is prefixed to the *Life* by Madame Home, and there is a threequarter-length

[1] Madame Home (*Life*, p. 31) states that the supposed change of name was a misconception; that Home himself had always spelt the name with an *o*, and that the spelling *Hume* was due to the ignorance of American journalists, who were misled by the sound ("Home" was pronounced *Hoom*). But it is difficult to reconcile this explanation with the fact that the name is spelt *Hume* in every document printed, whether in America or England, before 1855, and in many belonging to that year, even in the signature of the medium's own letters to newspapers. See *e.g.* the letter to the *Hartford Times*, reprinted in the *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph* for October, 1855.

[2] *Life and Mission*, pp. 67–70. [3] *Incidents* (First Series), p. 92.

[4] *Life and Mission*, p. 269. In recent times defaulting bank managers, occasional mail-cart drivers, and at least one lady of quality, have reported themselves as victims of outrages curiously similar. Shelley, it will be remembered, appears on one occasion to have had an hallucinatory experience of the kind.

oil painting in the rooms of the Spiritual Alliance. Here is a pen portrait of him by one of his earliest American friends, a Miss Ely, extracted from a contemporary letter written to her cousin: "He is but seventeen years old, tall for his age, fair complexion, hair neither red, brown, nor auburn, but a complete mixture of the three—like a three-coloured changeable silk—rather inclining to curl: and beautiful hair it is, as you can imagine: a large, broad forehead, well-developed, lively grey eyes, nose not remarkable, and a handsome mouth and teeth; easy manners; very intelligent for his age; perfectly artless and very affectionate."[1] Mr. Perdicaris described him to me as "not good-looking, though his face was as a rule pleasant to look upon; very vain of his personal appearance, with a quite innocent and not unpleasing vanity. Always pleasing manners, very affectionate towards all—men, women, and children alike."

Other testimonies which I have received orally from persons still living, or which are to be found scattered through the literature of Spiritualism, confirm generally this view of his character. There can be no doubt that he produced on most persons the impression of a highly emotional, joyous, childlike nature, full of generous impulses, and lavish of affection to all comers. That he possessed in full measure the defects of his temperament there can be as little doubt; affections so lightly given were liable to be as lightly recalled: vanity seems to have been the permanent element in his character; he basked in admiration; for the rest he showed throughout a disposition to take life easily, and to look out, in the American phrase, for "soft jobs." In short, as Mr. Andrew Lang has somewhere described him, "a Harold Skimpole with the gift of divination." The malignant side of his nature showed but rarely, and then chiefly in his attitude towards rival mediums. But it flashed out when his vanity was injured; and after his second marriage he treated many of his old friends with indifference, and some with marked ingratitude.[2]

Amongst Home's social accomplishments it must be mentioned that he was a good performer on the piano; and that his recitations, whether in the drawing-room or on the platform, are said by competent judges to have been dis-

[1] *The Gift of D. D. Home*, p. 66.

[2] The most careful and dispassionate account of Home's character which I have seen is contained in a letter from Miss Louise Kennedy—a lady who only knew him in his later years—written in July, 1891, to Mr. Lang, which appeared in the *Journal of the S. P. R.*, Jan., 1894.

tinguished by brilliant dramatic faculty and power of emotional expression. Even on those who were brought only into momentary contact with him he produced commonly the impression of frankness and sincerity:[1] in those who stood in more frequent and intimate relations with him the confidence which he inspired seems to have been unlimited. The belief in the honesty of the performer became for them hardly less instinctive than the belief in the trustworthiness of the senses which took note of the performance. The trust upon which other mediums relied was built up mainly by adventitious devices; with Home it was inspired and maintained by the charm of his personality.

But there were two other causes which contributed in no small degree to the confidence felt in Home's integrity. Home himself professed a fervent belief in his own mission as a teacher of the truth of immortality;[2] and in his trances habitually delivered discourses on religious themes. The late Lord Dunraven, in the preface to his son's series of letters on Home's mediumship, writes of the "high and pure morality" inculcated at Home's séances, and describes some of the trance utterances as "very touching and beautiful. A pure, lofty, and religious tone more or less pervades them." Other witnesses have written to the same effect.[3]

Again, the impression produced by Home's trance sermons was heightened by the frequent delivery of clairvoyant

[1] See *e.g.* the testimony of Robert Bell, in the *Cornhill* article already referred to; Mr. P. P. Alexander (*Spiritualism, a narrative with a discussion*, p. 2). "The impression he made on me was, on the whole, favourable. . . . His manners were simple and quiet, and very much those of a gentleman." Sub-Committee No. 5 of the Dialectical Society, which included Dr. Edmunds and Mr. C. Bradlaugh, had four sittings with Home. The sittings were fruitless, but the committee reported that "Mr. Home afforded every facility for examination, and appeared to be anxious to further the objects which the committee had in view" (*Dialectical Report*, p. 49). Mr. Bradlaugh gave independent testimony to the same effect (*Ibid.*, p. 279). On the other hand, Hamilton Aidé (*Nineteenth Century*, April, 1890, article "Was I Hypnotised?") could find "no glamour of esoteric power," nor "subtle fascination" about Home; and thought him "entirely unimpressive in any way."

[2] Thus, in speaking of the effect produced on T. A. Trollope by a séance at Ealing, Home writes: "When at length the light did beam upon his soul, and the chords of his spirit vibrated in unison with the celestial harmonies that ushered in the birth of faith through the shadows of his old unbelief, the result was too much for his stoicism, and the tears of holy joy coursed down his manly cheeks. . . . It was an impressive scene, and an occasion of deep interest. There are many such in the life of a spirit medium." (Letter from D. D. Home to the *Hartford Times* (U.S.A.), quoted in the *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*, Oct., 1855).

[3] See also Home's own writings, *e.g.* the article in the *Spiritual Magazine* for February, 1860, comparing the rise of Spiritualism to that of Christianity; and the chapters on the "Higher Aspects of Spiritualism," in his book *Lights and Shadows of Spiritualism*.

messages, purporting to proceed from dead friends of one or other of those present, and often showing an intimate knowledge of the past history of the persons addressed. Amongst the English and American witnesses who have testified to receiving messages of this kind which gave details of a private nature, presumably unknown to the medium, are S. B. Brittan, Ward Cheney, Dr. Garth Wilkinson, Dr. Gully, Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, Mrs. Nassau Senior, Mr. P. P. Alexander, Mr. J. S. Rymer, the present Earl of Dunraven, Dr. Hawksley, and others. Mr. Perdicaris has furnished me with two or three additional instances in his own experience of a very remarkable character. I have not space to consider the evidence for this clairvoyance, nor the possibilities of the information having been obtained by normal means. The whole subject of these alleged communications from the dead will be dealt with in a later chapter. The evidence, at any rate, in the case of Home, is far less complete than in the case of the later medium, Mrs. Piper, or than the evidence already considered in the chapter on Cahagnet's somnambules.[1] It is perhaps sufficient, however, to raise a presumption of Home's possession of supernormal powers. But our concern here is primarily not with the authenticity of these communications, but with the undoubted effect produced by them at the time in predisposing those present to accept Home's physical manifestations as genuine.[2]

Before we proceed to consider the physical manifestations one preliminary remark needs to be made. Home was never publicly exposed as an impostor; there is no evidence of any weight that he was even privately detected in trickery.[3] On

[1] Book I. chap. vi.

[2] Many of these trance communications are quoted at length in Madame Home's biographical notices of the medium. But the more important were published at the time, in the Spiritualist periodicals, especially, in this country, the *Spiritual Magazine*, and the various works of Alexander, Wilkinson, Rymer, etc., already referred to.

[3] The late F. W. H. Myers (*Journal S. P. R.*, July, 1889) has carefully examined this question. Mr. Browning personally explained to Mr. Myers that he had never detected Home cheating, and that the only definite evidence which he could show for his opinion that Home was an impostor was based upon a second-hand rumour that Home was once caught in Italy experimenting with phosphorus. No testimony has ever been adduced which even remotely approached first-hand for the alleged exposure at the Tuileries.

Mr. Myers also prints a letter from a gentleman known to him, written in 1889, in which the writer relates that at a séance held in 1855 he saw plainly that the alleged "spirit hands" were supported by and in obvious connection with Home's arms. The matter was not, however, mentioned at the time, and rests now on the unsupported memory of events which took place thirty-four years before the account was written (*Journal S. P. R.*, July, 1889, p. 121).

the assumption—an assumption which the whole course of our inquiries up to this point compels us to make—that the alleged physical marvels were fraudulent, this unique immunity from the common lot of mediumship certainly calls for explanation. Mainly, no doubt, it was due to Home's peculiar position as a non-professional medium; to the fact that his sitters were, in a sense, his guests; and that he himself in effect selected those before whom he would consent to perform. Again, we cannot exclude the possibility that there were cases in which imposture was actually detected by persons who refrained, out of consideration for the feelings of their friends, or from the fear of ridicule, from making their discovery public. But whatever deductions are made on this score, Home's immunity is not the least remarkable feature of his career, and may no doubt fairly be considered as weakening to some extent the general assumption referred to.

But though more fortunate, or haply more deserving, than his fellows, it is important to note that none of Home's manifestations seem to have been peculiar to himself. At the outset of his career, indeed, he appears to have won no special distinction as a medium. Raps were heard at his séances; tables and chairs were moved about; the room was shaken, bells, accordions, and guitars were played under the table or even at a distance from the circle, with no hand near them; spirit voices would speak through the medium; spirit hands were felt under the tablecloth, and occasionally seen above it; spirit lights made themselves visible; and the medium himself would be levitated. But all these performances were the common property of the guild; the Fox girls, Gordon, Cooley, E. P. Fowler, Abby Warner, and even Willis, the Harvard divinity student, were Home's rivals, and apparently, in the estimation of his contemporaries, at least his equals in all these feats. It is noteworthy that Home appears to have attracted comparatively little attention in the American Press before his journey to England.[1]

[1] There are, however, a few notices in the New York papers before 1855, some of which are quoted in the *Incidents*. See especially the account of a séance from the *Shekinah*, New York, vol. i. p. 289, quoted in the *Incidents* (First Series), p. 24. See also *Telegraph Papers*, vol. iii. pp. 211, 212; vol. vii. pp. 182, 261, 287; vol. viii. p. 293. That Home's séances attracted less attention than those of Gordon, the Foxes, or the Koons family was no doubt largely due to the fact that his performances were never given in public or to promiscuous circles. It should be noted, as bearing upon Home's relations to other mediums, that after his second visit to this country (1859–60) he associated himself for some time with another American medium, Squire, and that they even gave joint séances (see *Spiritual Magazine*, 1860, pp. 75, 88, 232, etc.). See above, pp. 51–2, for some account of Squire's mediumship.

His séances in this country followed for the most part on the lines sketched above. The room was commonly illuminated by one or more candles, a single gas-burner, or a shaded lamp, so that, in comparison with the almost complete darkness insisted on by other mediums, it could honestly be described as well lighted. The manifestations would then usually begin with raps, followed shortly by a quivering movement of the table, which is described by one witness as like the vibration in the cabin of a small steamer when the engine begins to work;[1] by another as resembling "a ship in distress, with its timbers straining in a heavy sea";[2] and in a finer flight of imagination is characterised by another witness as "literally trembling, as if every vein of the wood was a human nerve."[3] The table would then tilt up, move about, or "float" suspended in the air; musical instruments would perform in the convenient obscurity afforded by its shelter; hands would be felt clasping the knees of the sitters and pulling portions of their dress; handkerchiefs, flowers, and other light articles, and even heavy bells, would be handed about the circle, under the table, by the same means. The performance would be interspersed with messages rapped out by the spirits, or delivered through the mouth of the entranced medium.

At this point the sitting would commonly terminate. But if the conditions were judged favourable to the higher manifestations, the lights would be turned out, the fire screened, and the table drawn up to the window, the company sitting round three sides, leaving the side next the window vacant, with Home sitting at one end of the vacant space. Hands would then be seen, outlined against the faint light proceeding from the window, to rise over the vacant edge of the table, move about the papers lying on its surface, or give flowers to the sitters. Afterwards the medium would be levitated. An account of a typical séance of this kind, extracted from the *Cornhill* article by Robert Bell, will be found above.[4]

[1] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1861, p. 224.

[2] *Spiritualism*, by P. P. Alexander, p. 37. This imaginary resemblance was, as will be seen from Mr. Alexander's account, afterwards worked up into a striking test of "identity."

[3] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1861, p. 431.

[4] Pages 48–50. Other instances of séances at which hands appeared under these conditions—conditions, it should be remarked, which appear always to have been punctually observed—are given in *Spiritual Magazine*, 1860, pp. 233, 266, 338, 370, 524; *Evenings with Home*, by J. G. Wilkinson; *Dialectical Report*, p. 139; *Spirit Manifestations*, by Rymer; *The Spiritual Herald*, p. 108, account of a séance by "H. C." (Mrs. Helen Clarke), etc., etc.

Now as described it must be admitted that many of the phenomena which took place at Home's séances seem inexplicable: more inexplicable than in the case of other mediums. This difference is no doubt largely due, as already indicated, to the fact that Home's manners and appearance, his aloofness from the professional medium, and the atmosphere of smart society which encompassed him, inspired a confidence which encouraged the witnesses of his marvels to "let themselves go." The discerning reader will not need to be told that Robert Bell's mood when he sat in the dark and saw the spirit hands, was not that of dispassionate observation; and that he was, alike at the time and in retrospect, incapable of distinguishing between what he saw, heard, or felt, and what he inferred from those sensations. But Robert Bell was a much better witness than most. He admits that the room was very dark, and that Home's hands were visible only as a "faint white heap"; and he did not, like many of Home's sitters, profess to recognise the spirit hands which clasped his knees, or appeared as a transitory gleam of white at the far edge of the table. Nor would he, it is likely, have regarded as a proof of spirit intervention an incident recorded at this time by Mr. Enmore Jones. At the close of a dark séance, part of a bronze idol, which had been taken to pieces by the spirits and thrown about the room, was missing, and could not, after prolonged search, be discovered. Home came to the rescue and asked the spirits to guide his hands to the hiding-place of the missing article. The request was complied with. Enmore Jones comments on the incident, "It confirmed me in the belief that our spirit friends are more keen-eyed than we, that they hear our words, and can control even our physical organism."[1]

Unfortunately, though we have abundant evidence of the intellectual condition of the witnesses, we can rarely find independent accounts given in sufficient detail to enable us to prove such errors of interpolation and transposition, etc., as Dr. Hodgson was able to point out in the accounts of Eglinton's performances. One case may, however, be quoted. The account which appears in the left-hand column below is taken from J. S. Rymer's pamphlet, *Spirit Manifestations*, published in 1857; it professes to have been based on notes taken at the time, and as it is quoted by Home,[2] it may be presumed to have his endorsement. The date of the sitting,

[1] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1861, p. 480.
[2] *Incidents* (First Series), p. 69; see also *Gift of D. D. Home*, pp. 82, 83.

it will be seen, is not given. The account of the same sitting given in the right-hand column is by Mr. Thomas Dalling Barlee, of Ealing, and is quoted from a letter dated 23rd October, 1855, which was published in the *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*.[1]

MR. RYMER'S ACCOUNT.

"One evening I found seated at my long table my wife, my second son, Mr. Home, and two friends. I was passing through my room to my chamber. I stood for a few moments at the end of the table —my attention was immediately arrested by sounds; it was stated to be my little boy, who had passed away some years ago. I asked if he recollected how pleased he was when on earth to place me a chair on my return home. The chair was immediately moved round the corner of the table, and, by no visible agency, it was placed behind me, and I sat down upon it."

* * * * * *

(Here follows half a page of argument aimed at proving that the manifestation could not have been due to deception or illusion. The account then continues as given below).

"We were told through the alphabet that my little boy was present in spirit. I had heard of spirit-writing in America. Mr. Wolf, of Athens, co. Ohio, writes: 'Writing is done without human hands; the hand of the spirit is visible while the writing is done.' I asked if the unseen boy could write as on earth; he answered that he would try. I then took from my wife's writing-desk a sheet of notepaper, clean, and without any writing on it of any description. I borrowed a pencil from a lady friend who was at the table—the table had its usual cloth; on the cloth I placed the moved as

MR. BARLEE'S ACCOUNT.

"At Mr. Rymer's, on the 8th May, Mrs. Barlee and I formed part of a circle of fourteen. Very soon after we had all been seated round a heavy mahogany dining-table, large enough for a party of twenty, many different kinds of raps were distinctly heard, and presently the brass fastenings which held the parts of the table together beginning to make a rattling noise, Mr. Hume exclaimed, 'The spirits are actually trying to take the brass fastenings out, and to move this heavy table,' which was really the case. For soon after, hearing the brass fastenings fall, we looked under the table, and there found two of them which had thus been taken out, and then the table began to move about.

"At the time all this was going on, the hands of Mr. Hume and all present were, as usual, laid upon the table, and I am convinced that if he or any of the party had attempted to deceive us or had tried to take out the brass fastenings, and throw them under the table, the attempt and deception must have been discovered. Soon after the brass fastenings had thus been taken out, and the table had been moved about, without any human handling, many more distinct raps were heard, and as they were known by Mr. Hume and those present to be little Watty (a son of Mr. Rymer's, who died when about thirteen years old), Mr. R. said, 'Dear little Watty knows papa is always delighted to hear his merry little raps, and does Watty think he could write some-

[1] Vol. iii. pp. 21, 22.

if by a breath of air; the brass fastenings of my table were then displaced one by one, and fell to the ground; the table was opened or pulled out, and by no human agency; everyone in the room was seated at the table, and had their hands on its surface. I then asked if I should place the pencil and paper on the table near the opening under the cloth—three sounds (yes); I did so, and immediately the form of a small hand was seen under the cloth; it was felt by some who placed their hands upon it; the paper and pencil were then removed, the form of the hand disappearing at the same time. In a few minutes the same form of hand was again seen replacing the paper and pencil; the alphabet was called for: 'Dear papa, I have really done my very best.' I removed the paper and pencil, and on the paper was written, 'Dear papa, dear mama,' and signed 'Watt.' Watty was the name of my child. No one was aware that I intended to ask for this to be done. It was not prearranged even by myself; it was the thought of the moment."

thing for papa, who would so like to have some of dear Watty's writing?'—when the raps answered 'yes.'

"Mr. Rymer then put a sheet of notepaper and a pencil over the tablecloth, and presently I saw the paper and pencil begin to move without any visible handling, and soon after I saw the shadow of a finger on that part of the paper which was nearest to me, just about the time when an accordion which was on the table began to play. Some who were present saw a whole hand trying to take the pencil and paper up, but as my attention at that moment was turned to the music, I did not see the hand. Mr. Hume then said, 'As the spirits seem inclined to give us some music, let us hear that first, and in the meantime, if the paper and pencil are put under the cloth, I have no doubt little Watty will have written something before the music is finished.' Mr. Rymer then placed the pencil and paper under the tablecloth, and the accordion soon, without any visible handling, played 'Home, sweet Home.' (Here follows a description of the music). After the accordion ceased, Mr. Rymer said, 'Now let us see whether little Watty has written anything for papa,' when instantly five raps came calling for the alphabet, and then there was spelt, 'Dear papa, I have done my very best,' and on Mr. Rymer's taking up the paper he found written on it, 'Dear papa, dear mama, Watt,' and on comparing the handwriting with that contained in one of his last letters before he died, it was found to be exactly resembling the writing there, particularly the capital letters."

It is not necessary to point out all the discrepancies in these two accounts; it will be sufficient to indicate some of the most important. Mr. Rymer has apparently com-

bined the events of two separate séances; this will account for the discrepancy in the number reported to be present.[1] Moreover, Rymer's account of the order of the manifestations differs materially from Barlee's—the incident of the brass fastenings in one account precedes, in the other follows, the request for writing. Rymer omits the whole business of the accordion playing, a device, no doubt, for diverting attention from the writing. Barlee makes no mention of the incident recorded by Rymer, the removal and replacing of the paper and pencil. Again, according to Rymer, he himself suggested that the paper and pencil should be placed under the cloth; but Barlee tells us that the suggestion came from Home. There are, of course, other and by no means unimportant discrepancies.

In view, then, of the mental condition of the sitters and the fallibility of ordinary testimony on these matters demonstrated in the last chapter, it is not difficult to guess how most of Home's manifestations were accomplished. It may be conceded that many of the performances were held in a better light than was commonly the case with his rivals; and that the medium's hands were frequently at rest on the table during the performance, even though the only proof offered of this latter fact may have been the presence of "a faint white heap" where his hands should be. The medium's feet were probably responsible in most cases for the playing of bells and guitar under the table, the spirit touches, spirit hands, peregrination of chairs, floating of tables, and the rest of it. His knees and other parts of his person could give substantial help in the feats where more muscular action was required.[2] The hands seen at the edge of the table after the lowering of the lights and other preparations, call for no special explanation. Similar hands have been exhibited again and again by fraudulent mediums in America and England, and have been exposed to the lic gaze in Dr. Monck's portmanteau. It is to be noted r. Crookes, as he then was, appears never to have been with this particular manifestation. At the séances he has published notes hands were frequently felt nally seen by one or more sitters, but never so

quoting Rymer's account in the *Incidents*, inserts the words, "on r."

nds, who examined Home on the occasion of his sittings with the No. 5 of the Dialectical Society, reported to the Committee e possessed an extremely muscular and elastic frame" (*Dialecti-*). J. E. Boehm, the sculptor, writes of Home's "delicately t, and limbs in general" (*Life of Home*, p. 223).

unequivocally, or under such circumstances of elaborate preparation, as at Home's séances in 1860 and 1861 with observers of less scientific acumen.

It is to the experiments and observations made by the distinguished physicist that we must now turn our attention. In an article published in the *Quarterly Journal of Science* for July, 1870, Mr. Crookes, as already mentioned,[1] announced that he had been for some time past engaged in investigating the manifestations commonly called spiritualistic. Though by no means prepared to accept the Spiritualist hypothesis, he had seen enough to satisfy him of the occurrence of certain physical phenomena, not explicable "by any physical law at present known." But he pointed out that the precautions hitherto taken against fraud, and the methods adopted for ascertaining the extent and the reality of the effects produced, were alike insufficient. What those methods and precautions should be he indicated in a passage already quoted.[2]

A year later he was able to announce that he had succeeded in experimentally demonstrating the existence of a hitherto unknown force, and had measured the effects produced.[3] In justification of his claim he gave a detailed description of one series of experiments conducted in his own laboratory in the presence of four other persons, two of whom, Dr. (later Sir William) Huggins and Serjeant Cox attested the accuracy of his report, based upon notes made at the time. The "medium" of the new force was Daniel Dunglas Home. The apparatus employed in the chief experiment is thus described:—

"In another part of the room an apparatus was fitted up for experimenting on the alterations in the weight of a body. It consisted of a mahogany board 36 inches long by 9½ inches wide and 1 inch thick. At each end a strip of mahogany 1½ inches wide was screwed on, forming feet. One end of the board rested on a firm table, whilst the other end was supported by a spring balance hanging from a substantial tripod stand. The balance was fitted with a self-registering index, in such a manner that it would record the maximum weight indicated by the pointer. The apparatus was adjusted so that the mahogany board was horizontal, its foot resting flat on the support. In this position its weight was 3 lbs., as marked by the pointer of the balance.

"Before Mr. Home entered the room the apparatus had been arranged in position, and he had not even the object of some parts explained before sitting down."

[1] See above, p. 152. [2] Above, p. 183.
[3] *Quarterly Journal of Science*, July 1871.

When, after some preliminary experiments with an accordion, attention was turned to the apparatus, Mr. Home placed his finger lightly upon the extreme end of the mahogany board furthest from the balance, Dr. Huggins and Mr. Crookes sitting one on each side and watching; under these conditions the index of the balance moved several times, the greatest downward pull registered being 6 lbs.[1] It was particularly noticed, Mr. Crookes tells us, that Home's fingers were not at any time advanced more than 1½ inches from the extreme end of the board—that is, not outside the point of support—so that it was physically impossible for any pressure of his fingers to have produced the downward movements of the board shown by the index. Moreover, "his feet as well as his hands were closely guarded by all in the room."

The few scientific men who ventured any public criticism on these experiments contented themselves for the most part with pointing out possible defects in the apparatus employed, or some source of error in the actual conduct of the experiments. Some of these criticisms appear to have been founded on a misunderstanding of the facts; some, in themselves perhaps no better founded, Mr. Crookes endeavoured to meet by modifications of the apparatus.[2] But there were a few men who, equally disinclined apparently to believe, on the evidence adduced, in the genuineness of the alleged manifestations, or in the incompetence of the distinguished physicist who conducted the experiments, propounded yet another solution of the difficulty. Professor Balfour Stewart, in reviewing in *Nature*[3] Mr. Crookes' article, refers to the illusions produced by Mesmerists and electro-biologists, and conjectures that in the present instance the observers may have been hallucinated. Again, Mr. E. B. Tylor, enlarging an idea put forward by Dr. A. R. Wallace, that the were-wolf superstition might have been due to mesmeric influence exercised by certain persons, extended it to spiritualistic marvels in general, and suggested that D. D. Home and Mrs. Guppy might be were-wolves, endowed with the power of acting on the minds of sensitive spectators.[4]

There are perhaps amongst the marvels recorded by credible witnesses, including Mr. Crookes himself, cases in

[1] *i.e.* the index showed a *total* weight of 9 lbs.

[2] See Carpenter's article in the *Quarterly* already referred to, the letters from Sir C. Wheatstone, Sir G. G. Stokes, and others, and Mr. Crookes' replies, quoted in his *Researches;* a letter in *Nature*, August 3rd, 1871, from J. P. Earwaker, etc., etc. [3] July 27th, 1871. [4] *Nature*, 29th Feb., 1872.

which a modified form of this hypothesis would seem to be the only alternative to believing in the manifestation of a new physical force.[1] But such a drastic solution is hardly required to explain the recorded movements of the balance. The experiment as it stands, even without the modifications introduced later by Mr. Crookes in deference to his scientific critics, seems, indeed, conclusive against the possibility of Home's affecting the balance by any pressure on his end of the board. But, tested by the canons laid down by Mr. Crookes himself at the outset of his investigations, we shall find the conditions of the experiment defective in one important particular. Mr. Crookes had shown that it is the province of scientific investigation not merely to ascertain the reality of the alleged movements and measure their extent, but to establish their occurrence under conditions which render fraud impossible. In the passage quoted on page 183 it is implicitly recognised that such conditions are to be secured by eliminating the necessity for continuous observation on the part of the investigator. The proof of the thing done should depend upon something else than the mere observation of the experimenters, however skilled.

Now in the experiment quoted these conditions were not fulfilled. On the contrary, we are expressly told that all present guarded Home's feet and hands. It is pertinent to point out that a duty for which the whole company were collectively responsible may well at times have been intermitted. Moreover, Dr. Huggins and Mr. Crookes had to watch the balance also, and Mr. Crookes had to take notes. Again, the experiment described was not the first of the kind; it occurred in the middle of a long series. It is indeed stated that Home was not familiar with the apparatus employed. But as similar apparatus had been employed, probably at previous trials by Mr. Crookes himself, certainly by earlier investigators—amongst them Dr. Hare,[2] with whose published writings on Spiritualism we cannot assume that Home was unacquainted—the statement carries little weight. Further, a point of capital importance, there had apparently been many previous trials with various modifications of the apparatus and many failures; in Mr. Crookes' own words, "the experiments I have tried have been very numerous, but owing to our imperfect knowledge of the conditions which favour or oppose the manifestations of this force, to the apparently capricious manner in which it is exerted, and to

[1] See the discussion on this point in the next chapter.
[2] See above, vol. i. p. 234, for some account of Hare's experiments.

the fact that Mr. Home himself is subject to unaccountable ebbs and flows of the force, it has but seldom happened that a result obtained on one occasion could be subsequently confirmed and tested with apparatus specially contrived for the purpose."[1]

The real significance of this statement is that Home—a practised conjurer, as we are entitled to assume—was in a position to dictate the conditions of the experiment. By the simple device of doing nothing when the conditions were unfavourable he could ensure that the light (gas in the present instance) was such and so placed, the apparatus so contrived, and the sitters so disposed, as to suit his purpose, and that in the actual experiment the attention of the investigators would necessarily be concentrated on the wrong points. Under such conditions, as ordinary experience shows, and as the experiments described in the last chapter have abundantly demonstrated, five untrained observers are no match for one clever conjurer.

The word "untrained" in this connection may seem to require justification. Of Sir William Crookes' high distinction in many branches of physical science there is no need to speak here. But his previous training did not necessarily render him better qualified to deal with problems differing widely from those presented in the laboratory. To put it bluntly, if Home was a conjurer, Mr. Crookes was probably in no better position for detecting the sleight-of-hand than any other man his equal in intelligence and native acuteness of sense. Possibly even in a worse position; for it may be argued that his previous training would prepare the way for Home's efforts to concentrate attention on the mechanical apparatus, and thus divert it from the seemingly irrelevant movements by which it may be conjectured the conjurer's end was attained.

Moreover, the record of the experiments is obviously incomplete. The date is not given. We only know that it took place before June 8th, 1871, the date of Serjeant Cox's r letter. Again, the amount of light is not stated. a brief prefatory statement that the experie in the evening and that the room was

Further on he remarks with reference to the various the article: "Although space will allow only the publi- one trial, it must be clearly understood that for some aking similar experiments with like results. The meet- described was for the purpose of *confirming previous* a of crucial tests, with carefully arranged apparatus, achable witnesses" (*op. cit.*, p. 17).

lighted by gas. If we turn to the detailed notes of selected experiments undertaken about this time which Mr. Crookes contributed to the *Proceedings of the S. P. R.*,[1] we shall find that this particular experiment indeed is not included, but that at a similar experiment which took place a few weeks later (June 21st) the light, by Home's order, was so diminished that at the first trial "there was scarcely light enough to see the board and the index move."[2] Moreover, as Lehmann has pointed out in his criticism of this experiment,[3] it seems probable from reading these fuller notes that the account published in the *Quarterly Journal of Science* represents only a part of what took place at the séance. Mr. Crookes selected, as he had a perfect right to do, and published only those details (including the temperature of the room) which to the man of science seemed relevant. But, as we have already seen, in investigating the performances of conjurers even the most intelligent witness is apt to reject as irrelevant precisely those details which would give the clue to the trick.

For us, I am inclined to think, that clue may be found in a very early manifestation of Home's, which he seems to have been chary of repeating in his later years, and which Mr. Crookes—I infer from his published writings on the subject—had never seen. In the accounts of the early physical phenomena in America I have quoted a description of a séance with Home, during which the table was tilted at a precarious angle, without the displacement of various small objects which rested on its polished surface.[4] Lord Adare (the present Earl of Dunraven) was favoured with one—and only one—unequivocal example of this manifestation.[5] But I can remember no other detailed account of a similar feat in all the records of Home's séances in this country.[6] This extremely effective exhibition was, I take it, dropped from Home's repertory for prudential reasons. The articles were probably, it may be suggested, held in position when the table was tilted by means of hairs or fine threads attached to Home's dress. If the illumination and background are properly arranged, a dark thread is practically invisible in such a case, even to eyes that know what to look for. Mr. Davey used to employ a hair or thread to move bits of

[1] Vol. vi. p. 98, etc.
[2] *loc. cit.*, p. 110.
[3] *Aberglaube und Zauberei*, pp. 271–3. Stuttgart, 1898,
[4] Vol. i. pp. 242–3.
[5] *Experiences in Spiritualism*, pp. 1, 2. A similar manifestation is briefly described by Madame Home as having taken place in Paris (*Life*, p. 92).
[6] In the *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*, vol. iii. p. 22, Mr. Barlee briefly refers to a similar manifestation.

coloured chalk under a glass tumbler, when the eyes of all present were concentrated upon the spot; and would even by similar means cause a tumbler to glide across the table. I have described below (pp. 272–3) a similar trick, for which I have known human hair to be employed. The risk of using threads to keep small objects in place on the inclined table is obvious; a suspicious or too curious sitter might at any moment discover the trick. Or, if several objects were attached, the threads might become entangled, or the performance miscarry in other ways. But if a single loop is used the risks are considerably lessened; and if the experimenters are not too close to the point of attachment a movement on the part of any of them could generally be foreseen, and the medium would have time to let go one end of the thread, which would then fall to the ground and could be drawn in at leisure.

It is by the use of such a thread, I venture to suggest, that the watchful observation of Mr. Crookes and his colleagues was evaded. Given a subdued light, and opportunity to move about the room—and from the detailed notes of later séances it seems probable that Home could do as he liked in both respects—the loop could be attached without much risk of detection to some part of the apparatus, preferably the hook from which the distal end of the board was suspended, the ends being fastened to some part of Home's dress, *e.g.* the knees of his trousers, if his feet and hands were under effectual observation.

There are some other rather puzzling movements of small objects recorded in Mr. Crookes' detailed notes which may yield their secret to the same clue; in particular, the floating of a small lath. Thus, towards the end of the séance on June 21st, 1871, after having got up to inspect the balance and registering apparatus, and to move it away from the table, the sitters resumed their seats, and a message shortly came, "Hands off the table and all joined." After this the record proceeds:—

"Just in front of Mr. Home and on the table was a thin wooden lath 23¼ inches long, 1½ inches wide, and ⅜ inch thick, covered with white paper. It was plainly visible to us all,[1] and was one foot from the edge of the table. Presently the end of the lath, pointing

[1] The amount of light is not stated. It had been, as already mentioned, so faint at the beginning of this sitting that the index could be read with difficulty. Later the gas was turned up; but from the fact that Mr. Crookes thought it necessary to state that a white object two feet long was plainly visible, it may, I think, be inferred that the illumination was sufficiently subdued to allow levitation in the manner suggested in the text.

towards Mr. Walter Crookes, rose up in the air to the height of about ten inches. The other end then rose up to a height of about five inches, and the lath then floated about for more than a minute in this position suspended in the air, with no visible means of support. It moved sideways and waved gently up and down, just like a piece of wood on the top of small waves of the sea. The lower end then gently sank till it touched the table and the other end followed.

"Whilst we were speaking about this wonderful exhibition of force, the lath began to move again, and rising up as it did at first, it waved about in a somewhat similar manner. The startling novelty of the movement having now worn off, we were all enabled to follow its motions with more accuracy. Mr. Home was sitting away from the table at least three feet from the lath all this time; he was apparently quite motionless, and his hands were tightly grasped, his right by Mrs. Walter Crookes and his left by Mrs. William Crookes. Any movement by his feet was impossible, as, owing to the large cage[1] being under the table, his legs were not able to be put beneath, but were visible to those on each side of him. All the others had hold of hands."[2]

The sittings were held in Mr. Crookes' dining-room, and the assistants sat round the dining-room table. The occupation of the sitters with the balance apparatus immediately before the manifestation would have afforded Home an opportunity for adjusting the loops of thread over the gaselier, whilst the injunction to join hands secured him from any serious risk of interruption.

It seems possible, therefore, to explain the great bulk of the marvels recorded of Home by a combination of trickery on the one side and unconscious misinterpretation on the other. But it is not easy to see how the investigators of a generation ago could have been deceived, and repeatedly deceived, by any device of the kind suggested; and if we find ourselves unable to accept Mr. Crookes' testimony, we are guided to an adverse decision less perhaps by any defects which have been demonstrated in the particular evidence here presented than by that general presumption against the operation of the supposed new physical energy which, as already shown, inevitably follows from an analysis of all the cognate evidence accumulated down to the present day.[3] Even so there remain a few manifestations which the hypothesis of simple trickery does not seem to fit. Some of these marvels—the levitations, the elongations, and the fire-ordeal—will be dealt with in the next chapter.

[1] An upright cylinder of about two feet in diameter used in these experiments to isolate the accordion.

[2] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. vi. p. 111.

[3] See above, p. 185.

CHAPTER IV

WAS THERE HALLUCINATION?

TO persons familiar with the effects of suggestion on hypnotised subjects the idea naturally presented itself that the more marvellous phenomena reported by attendants at spiritualistic séances might be ascribed to hallucination. As we have seen in the last chapter, such views were advanced, among others, by Professor Balfour Stewart and Dr. E. B. Tylor to explain Mr. Crookes' experiences with Home. Later, at the British Association Meeting of 1876, the theory was again put forward tentatively by Professor W. F. Barrett. If we are to take some of the accounts given by witnesses of credit and intelligence as accurately representing what they saw, the only alternative to a wholesale surrender to the occult forces would be to postulate a not less wholesale state of hallucination on the part of the witnesses. But the problem is never, of course, put before us in such clear and unmistakable terms. However brief the interval between the event and its record, it is sufficient, as we saw in a previous chapter, to allow scope for the action of the constructive faculties. The document with which we have to deal is in no case the photographic record which it purports to be, but a work of art of more or less originality. In many cases we can recognise that the interval is of sufficient length to allow the prodigy to mature. Thus, as we have already seen in the Wesley case,[1] and as we may see in any modern Poltergeist story, the farther events recede in time the larger they loom in the imagination. Many of the records of Home's séances appear to be of this kind. Dr. Thomas Hawksley, in an undated letter quoted by Madame Home,[2] states that he and a friend visited Home

[1] Vol. i. pp. 32 *et seq.*

[2] *Life*, pp. 186–9; see also *Journal S. P. R.*, July, 1889, p. 122. The letter is said by Madame Home to have been written for the purpose of being included in her book, published in 1888, and therefore many years after the events which it relates.

one day in broad daylight, that his friend stood on a heavy centre claw table, and that table and man were lifted eight inches in the air, whilst Dr. Hawksley satisfied himself by passing his hand under the castors that the table was clear of the ground. So Mr. Perdicaris told me that at his first sitting with Home, which took place in 1868, in his mother's house in London, Mr. Perdicaris himself, his mother, Mrs. Mowatt Ritchie (an invalid on sofa), and an old housekeeper were sitting round a table with Home, there was a gaselier over the table with three jets lighted; "suddenly table, sofa, chairs, and sitters were all moved several feet off," apparently by supernormal power.

In such cases as these, however sober-minded and conscientious the witnesses, it is easier to find the explanation of the marvel in a fallacy of memory than in a fallacy of sense.[1] "I want to ask your advice," said a patient to Professor Janet, "how can I distinguish between a memory and a dream?" and, indeed, as Janet remarks, the question raises a very delicate problem.[2] For the differences between memory and imagination, all-important to the historian, to the psychologist may be trivial or irrelevant. Where doubt on the subject is possible it is not by introspection that we shall learn to decide between them.

But when the interval between event and record is very brief, the assumption of a fallacy of memory of this extreme kind cannot seem an altogether satisfactory solution. Take, for instance, the following narrative by the Rev. Thomas Colley (afterwards Archdeacon Colley). Mr. Colley was present at a séance on September 25th, 1877, and wrote out his account of it the same evening. The medium was Dr. Monck, and the sitting apparently took place in a private house:—

"Dr. Monck, under control of 'Samuel,' was by the light of the lamp—the writer not being a yard away from him—seen by all to be *the living gate for the extrusion of spirit forms from the realm of mind into this world of matter;* for standing forth thus plainly before us, the psychic or spirit form was seen to grow out of his left side. First, several faces one after another, of great beauty,

[1] The question asked by Hamilton Aïdé, in his article, "Was I Hypnotised?" (*Nineteenth Century*, April, 1890) may no doubt be answered in the negative. If we were forced to take Mr. Aïdé's narrative as an accurate representation of what he saw at a sitting with Home, we might be hard put to it for any better explanation. But the article was written twenty years after the events which it records, and, though the author speaks of "referring to his note-book," bears internal evidence of being founded mainly on memory.

[2] *Nevroses et idées fixes*, vol. ii. p. 168.

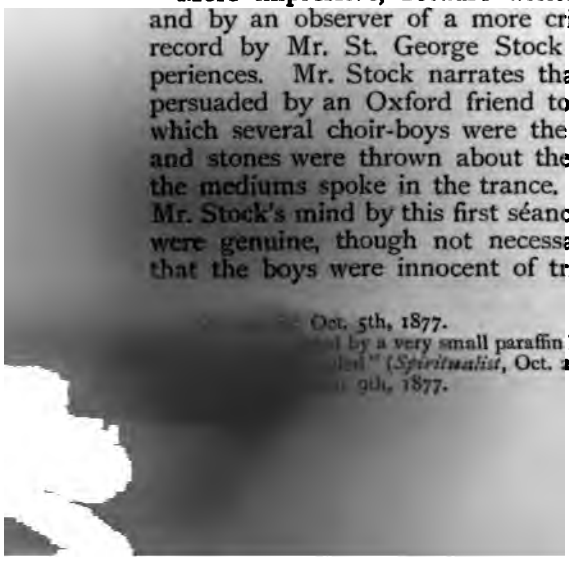
appeared, and in amazement we saw—and as I was standing close up to the medium, even touching him, I saw most plainly—several times a perfect face and form of exquisite womanhood partially issue from Dr. Monck, about the region of the heart. Then after several attempts a full-formed figure, in a nebulous condition at first, but growing solider as it issued from the medium, left Dr. Monck, and stood a separate individuality, two or three feet off, bound to him by a slender attachment as of gossamer, which, at my request, 'Samuel,' the control, severed with the medium's left hand, and there stood embodied a spirit form of unutterable loveliness, robed in attire spirit-spun—a meshy webwork from no mortal loom, of a fleeciness inimitable, and of transfiguration whiteness truly glistening."

Later in the evening, when the time came for the form to retire, the gossamer filament again appeared, and Mr. Colley tells us that he saw the spirit figure sucked back, as by a psychic waterspout, into the body of the medium, and watched the angel face fade and finally disappear.[1]

Mr. Colley does not state how much light the lamp gave, but at a later séance, held at Dr. Monck's own rooms, with Mr. and Mrs. Colley and Mr. Stainton Moses present, the latter describes the light as faint.[2]

It is difficult to believe that the exquisite spirit form which presented itself to Mr. Colley's glowing imagination was merely a confection of masks, stuffed gloves, and muslin, actuated by a jointed rod, but we cannot help remembering, if Mr. Colley did not, that articles of this kind had, a twelvemonth previously, been found, under compromising circumstances, in the possession of Dr. Monck.[3]

More impressive, because written with greater restraint, and by an observer of a more critical temperament, is the record by Mr. St. George Stock of one of his early experiences. Mr. Stock narrates that in March, 1872, he was persuaded by an Oxford friend to take part in a séance at which several choir-boys were the mediums. Bits of paper and stones were thrown about the room, and one or two of the mediums spoke in the trance. The impression left upon Mr. Stock's mind by this first séance was that the phenomena were genuine, though not necessarily of spirit origin, and that the boys were innocent of trickery. A few days later



Oct. 5th, 1877.
by a very small paraffin lamp, which was placed in a corner
" (*Spiritualist*, Oct. 26th, 1877).
9th, 1877.

he had a second séance, with eight choir-boys, in his friend's room, the host, however, not being present:—

"We took tea together as before. Whilst the boys were still seated round the table I rose and walked to the mantelpiece, turning over in my mind how I should broach to the boys my intention of examining their pockets. There were four candles burning on the mantelpiece, by the side of which I took my stand. The boys, as I have said, were still seated round the table, which was at a considerable distance, and were chatting together about some game of cricket. Such was the position of affairs in the room, when a shower of folded papers descended upon me, floating gradually down, as if dropped very gently. One of them alighted on my hand, and so called my attention to the rest. They did not seem, as the stones did [on the previous occasion] to come from or through the ceiling, but rather to start into sudden existence in the air above me. It was physically impossible for these papers to have been thrown at me by the boys at the table, and I thought it perfectly ludicrous after this to propose the examination I had intended, a test having been given me far more satisfactory than any I could have devised."[1]

The account is based upon a detailed report written on the following day.[2]

In both these cases—unless we are to suppose that angelic forms did really grow out of Dr. Monck's body, and bits of paper did really fall from nowhere before Mr. Stock's eyes—it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that we have to do with something more than a mere fallacy of memory. In other words, we have to suppose that Mr. Colley and Mr. Stock were hallucinated. The hypothesis of hallucination in such circumstances requires, no doubt, some justification. To most persons, it may be surmised, the word "hallucination" represents a rare psychical catastrophe, a kind of volcanic eruption from subterranean depths, symptomatic at the lowest of a profound disturbance of the personality. But whilst, on the one hand, the work of the Census Committee of the English Society for Psychical Research has shown that sensory hallucinations are compatible with ordinary health and sanity, and so far from being uncommon that about one adult Englishman in ten can recall such an experience; on the other hand, modern psychology recognises in such sensory fallacies only the product of familiar mental processes pushed to extremes. For it can be shown that, even in normal per-

[1] *Spiritualist*, Oct. 20th, 1876.
[2] As I learn from a private letter from Mr. Stock.

ception, part only, and it may be a small part, of what we "perceive" is due to the impression actually made on the external sense-organ; another, and it may be a larger part, can be definitely traced to the reproduction of previous sensations, some similar, some disparate, aroused by subconscious processes of association. In other words, a considerable and essential part of all that we claim to see and hear is due to our own imagination; or, to quote a well-known paradox of Taine's: "Au lieu de dire que l'hallucination est une perception extérieure fausse, il faut dire que la perception extérieure est une hallucination vraie."[1] And modern psychologists generally incline to the view that between what we call true perception and those false perceptions which we call illusion and hallucination there is no psychological difference at all comparable in importance to the practical difference between fact and fancy; that the false perception represents in many cases merely a slightly anomalous reaction to sensory stimuli; a perception in which the associative processes have summoned up the wrong ideas.[2]

The cause of this anomalous reaction of the brain to the impression made upon the external sense organs (let us say, the retinal impression, since we are here concerned mostly with visual hallucinations) is to be sought commonly in the condition of the brain itself at the moment. Either there is some general dissociation of consciousness—a dissociation which may range from acute mania down to hypnosis or the drowsiness which precedes sleep—or there may be some local disturbance of equilibrium leading to the undue prominence of certain ideas, that is, in terms of psycho-physiology, to tension of a particular group of cells. It is this last condition, familiarly known as expectant attention, which is probably responsible for most of the sense deceptions of normal life. When the mind is full, as we say, of a particular idea, very

[1] *De l'Intelligence*, 4th edition, vol. ii. p. 13.

[2] Whether there are or are not any hallucinations in the old sense of the term, *i.e.* sensory perceptions originating without any sensory stimuli, is for the present purpose immaterial. One of the latest writers on the subject, Edmund Parish, in his *Hallucinations and Illusions* (English translation, London, 1897), claims that all hallucinations may be reduced to the type of illusion in the old sense, *i.e.* as started from without by an actual sensory stimulus. Binet, by a different line of reasoning, arrives at the same conclusion. W. James (*Principles of Psychology*, vol. ii. p. 115) admits that hallucinations are often only extreme cases of the perceptive process, in which the secondary cerebral reaction is out of all normal proportion to the peripheral stimulus which occasions the activity; but he is inclined to believe that some hallucinations are centrally initiated. In the text I have, for the sake of convenience, used hallucination in Parish's sense, as practically equivalent to illusion of an extreme kind.

slight, and otherwise indifferent, sensory stimuli are liable to call up that idea; the slighter and more ambiguous, indeed, the sense impression, the more liable is it to be misinterpreted in accordance with the dominant idea. Thus, when expecting to meet a friend, we constantly see resemblances to him in the faces of casual strangers; or again, as we have already seen, in the dim light of a materialisation séance the sitters are ready to recognise in any white-robed figure the spirit of mother, sister, or wife.[1]

The majority of the sense deceptions which we meet in the investigation of Spiritualist records are no doubt of this type—quasi-hallucinatory faces superimposed upon the faint outlines presented or suggested to the sense of sight at a dark séance or in a spirit photograph.[2] There is a professional medium now (1901) performing in London, at whose séances spirit faces are reported constantly to be seen. The performance takes place, of course, in the dark; the faces are shown in profile against the background of a faintly illuminated slate, and few would appear to pass without the tribute of recognition from one or other member of the circle. From various letters which have appeared in *Light*,[3] it would seem that the female faces which are seen at this medium's séances generally have the lower part of their faces veiled by drapery, so as to conceal the mouth and chin. But this circumstance does not appear materially to affect the recognition.[4]

That in some cases an hallucinatory image is actually presented to the senses of the witness seems probable. The clearest illustration of the kind known to me is furnished by some recent exhibitions given by a non-professional medium. The lady in question allows certain favoured persons to look into a crystal, inclosed in a small open box, which is not as a rule allowed to leave the medium's own hands. At the back of the crystal, *i.e.* at the bottom of the box, the seer discerns a face apparently drawn rather sketchily in outline, in black and white. So far the performance would seem a rather transparent trick. But it is the case that some persons have recognised in these sketchy outlines the unmistakable portraits of friends. There is no verbal suggestion from the medium; nor, indeed, could verbal suggestion be directly helpful, since the likenesses seen are

[1] See W. James, *op. cit.*, vol ii. p. 97.
[2] See Book III. chaps. vi. and vii.
[3] See *e.g.* letter from "T. S.," 9th March, 1901.
[4] The medium, it should be stated, is a man.

sometimes of persons long dead, of whom the medium would, it is likely, never have heard.[1]

Illusory impressions of this kind represent, it seems probable, the simplest form of hallucination, the form which implies the least disturbance of ordinary consciousness, and is often hardly to be distinguished from the normal process of perception.

At dark séances we frequently find a more pronounced form of sense deception, approximating to the type of "pure" hallucination. Some of the most favoured attendants at Home's circle would see shadowy figures, which were unmistakably of an hallucinatory character.[2] Similar apparitions are recorded by other witnesses with other mediums. The clearest account of the phenomenon which I have seen is contained in an article by Professor Harlow Gale, "A Study in Spiritistic Hallucinations."[3] The subject of the study, Dr. S., a private medium and, apparently, an honest man, gave dark séances at which he and others habitually professed to see figures, sometimes of sacred personages, sometimes of deceased friends, standing near them. On some occasions they even claimed to shake hands with the figure, and to feel the material contact. Flowers were also seen and lights. The room at these meetings was in almost complete darkness; and each seer described at once the figure which he professed to see. It is likely that the starting-point for the hallucination was furnished by the patches of light which came through crevices in the door and window, or by the retinal light or other sensation proceeding from the eye itself; and that the image was completed, as is probably the case in nearly all hallucinations of this kind, under the influence of direct verbal suggestion from the medium or the original seer. A dim light seems to be essential for sense deceptions of this nature; and the emotions cultivated at a séance prove no doubt powerful auxiliaries in their production.

A good illustration of similar illusions engendered by expectancy, and conditioned by darkness, is given by Robert Louis Stevenson. In his voyages in the South Seas he describes how, one dark night, having got out of their reckon-

[1] Amongst those who have described to me this performance, and have assured me that they have "recognised" faces in the box, are the late Mr. F. W. H. Myers, and Mr. C., a Cambridge graduate. In the latter case, at any rate, the visions were not emotionally inspired; one of them represented a mere casual acquaintance, another a college tutor, and so on.

[2] See the references quoted at the end of this chapter.

[3] *S. P. R. Proc.*, vol. xv. p. 65.

ing, all on board were anxiously looking out for the coral island which was their goal :—

"Islands we beheld in plenty, but they were of 'such stuff as dreams are made on,' and vanished at a wink, only to reappear in other places; and, by-and-by, not only islands, but refulgent and revolving lights began to stud the darkness; lighthouses of the mind or of the wearied optic nerve, solemnly shining and winking as we passed."[1]

Again, we meet occasionally, in more normal circumstances, with sensory fallacies of a marked type, where the imagination, filled with a dominant idea, reacts upon some slight or ambiguous sense impression so as to construct a complete hallucinatory drama. Thus, in a case published in the S.P.R. Report on the Census of Hallucinations, a lady, on hearing a sound like that of a latch-key in the front door, straightway saw an hallucinatory figure of her father, accompanied by his dog, crossing the hall.[2] The following case, quoted in the same report, is an even better illustration of the hallucinatory development and embellishment of a slight and fugitive sense impression :—

"Some years ago a friend and I rode—he on a bicycle, I on a tricycle—on an unusually dark night in summer from Glendalough to Rathdrum. It was drizzling rain, we had no lamps, and the road was overshadowed by trees on both sides, between which we could just see the skyline. I was riding slowly and carefully some ten or twenty yards in advance, guiding myself by the skyline, when my machine chanced to pass over a piece of tin or something else in the road that made a great crash. Presently my companion came up, calling to me in great concern. He had seen through the gloom my machine upset and me flung from it. The crash had excited the thought of the most likely cause for it, and . . . this involved a visual perception of the mind, faint, but sufficient on this occasion to be seen with sufficient distinctness when not overpowered by objects seen in the ordinary way through the eyes."[3]

[1] *In the South Seas*, edition of 1900, p. 142.

[2] *S. P. R. Proc.*, vol. x. p. 181.

[3] "On the Limits of Vision," by Dr. J. G. Stoney, *Phil. Magazine*, March, 1894. Sir John Herschel gives a case of hallucination experienced by himself, which admirably illustrates the action of long-established association. He had been watching with some anxiety the demolition of a familiar building. On the following day at evening, but whilst the light was still pretty good, he passed the spot where it had stood. "Great was my amazement to see it as if still standing, projected against the dull sky. . . . I walked on, and the perspective of the form and disposition of the parts appeared to change . . . as they would have done if real" (*Familiar Lectures on Scientific Subjects*, p. 405).

Again, Beard has described how a steamer in which he was crossing the Atlantic collided with a sailing vessel. It was night, and the cry went forth that the steamer was stove in and the bow sinking. All eyes were turned to the bow, and to all it appeared to be sinking. "I shall never forget," writes Beard, "how it gradually lowered in the darkness." But in fact the vessel was uninjured.[1] Hallucinatory misinterpretations of distant objects such as occasionally occur at sea furnish another illustration of the same principle. Thus, when the French frigate *La Belle Poule* was searching for a missing consort, the watch signalled a disabled vessel, and the whole crew in full daylight saw a raft and boats crowded with men. A boat was sent to the rescue, and found only a few floating branches of trees.[2] Many of the recorded apparitions of the sea-serpent have, no doubt, a like explanation.

I should be disposed, then, to interpret the experiences of Mr. Colley and Mr. Stock quoted above as illusions or hallucinations of this last type. Both witnesses were certainly under the influence of expectancy. Mr. Colley had seen materialised figures in Dr. Monck's presence before; Mr. Stock, as we have read, had witnessed at the previous séance bits of paper and stones thrown about the room, and had inclined to the belief that these movements were not due to trickery. Both, no doubt, at the séance which we are now considering saw something for which they could not account; and the imagination, supplementing the imperfect data of sensation, *as the imagination supplements sensation in every act of perception*, filled in the picture on these occasions on lines predetermined by the previous experiences of the witnesses.

Probably some of the more marvellous feats described at Home's séances can be analysed into sensory deceptions of this nature. The circumstances were peculiarly favourable for illusion of the kind supposed. The minds of the witnesses were attuned, by previous exhibitions of minor feats, to the proper degree of receptivity. The nature of the marvel to be looked for was indicated beforehand, so that the imagination would have less difficulty, when the rough sketch was supplied, in completing the picture, much as Dr. Stoney's friend constructed, on the hint of a noise, a complete picture

[1] Quoted by J. N. Langley in a lecture on "The Physiological Aspect of Mesmerism," given before the Royal Institution, March, 1884.

[2] Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologie des Foules*. Paris, 1895. Le Bon quotes the incident from the *Revue Scientifique*.

of a tricycle accident. Again, this last illustration presents a near parallel in another respect to Home's séances. The light was in most cases extremely faint. There can be no doubt that a sensory deception of the kind supposed occurs much more readily when the original sensation is vague and ill-defined, as anything seen in a dim light must be.[1] The so-called "levitations" of Home offer probably the clearest examples of the process.

The earliest instance of Home's "levitation" occurred in the summer of 1852, at the residence of Mr. Ward Cheney, in the State of Connecticut. An account of this levitation will be found on page 245, vol. i. of the present work. It will be seen from the instances there cited that the feat was not peculiar to Home; at least one professional contemporary, Gordon, had given exhibitions of the same kind. In Home's case it will be seen that the performance took place in a room previously darkened, ostensibly for another purpose; and the evidence that the medium was levitated consisted in his own statement to that effect, corroborated by the palpable demonstration of his boots suspended in the air. Later, we have a very full and candid account, by Robert Bell, of a levitation which took place in 1860.[2] In this case also the room had been carefully darkened before the feat was attempted; and the evidence for the fact of levitation consisted in the sound of Home's voice in the air, his own descriptions of his movements, contact with his boots on the back of a chair, and an appearance as of his person, or some part of it, projected against the dim, grey light which came through the blind drawn down across the window.

Most of the recorded levitations of Home are of this character. After various minor manifestations had educated the witnesses to the proper frame of receptivity, the lights would be extinguished, and the room reduced to almost complete darkness. Home would then explain that the spirits were lifting him up; his voice would be heard as if high in the air; some favoured guest would be allowed to grasp his hand or foot; and perhaps a dim silhouette of his legs would be seen against the window-blind. Thus, to take a few instances, "J. G. C.," in an account of a séance which took place apparently early in 1860, records:—

"Shortly after this a very curious affair took place . . . Mr. Home remarked, 'I feel as if I am going to rise.' The room was quite

[1] For the psychological explanation of the superior power of weak sensations to give rise to hallucination see W. James, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. pp. 83, 123, etc.

[2] *Cornhill Magazine*, Aug., 1860. The account is quoted above, pp. 49–50.

dark. He said, 'I am getting up,' and as I was only a few feet from him I put out my hand to him. I indubitably felt the soles of both his boots, some three feet above the level of the floor. On my doing so he said, 'Don't touch me, or I shall come down.' Of course, I instantly desisted, but down he came. In less than five minutes after this he remarked, 'I am again ascending,' and from the sound of his voice we could not but infer that he was actually rising towards the ceiling of the ante-room."[1]

At another séance, after the lights had been put out and the blinds drawn down, a similar performance took place in the dark, but in this case, at the request of one of the sitters, "he was floated with his feet horizontally into the light of the window, so that we all saw his feet and a part of his legs resting or floating in the air like a feather, about six feet from the ground."[2] On another occasion, recorded by Mr. Wason, the main evidence for the levitation consisted in the fact that the witness held Home's hand in the dark and moved along with the medium for about six paces until he fell over a stool.[3]

Of levitations which are said to have taken place in the light we have two accounts by Mr. Enmore Jones. He records that on one occasion, by the light of a single gas-burner and a bright fire, Home rose vertically in the air until he was a foot above the floor. No details are given, not even the date of the séance.[4] In his evidence before the Dialectical Society, Mr. Jones stated that in a large, well-lighted room in his own house, he and all his family saw his aged mother, together with the chair she sat on, rise in the air until her knees were level with the rim of the table.[5]

Mr. Crookes, in his detailed notes of sittings, records two cases of levitation at which he was present. On July 30th, 1871, shortly after the gas had been turned out and spirit lamps [*i.e.* lamps burning spirit] substituted :—

"Mr. Home walked to the open space in the room between Mr. I.'s chair and the sideboard, and stood there quite upright and quiet. He then said, 'I'm rising, I'm rising,' when we all saw him rise from the ground slowly to a height of about six inches, remain there for about ten seconds, and then slowly descend. From my position I could not see his feet, but I distinctly saw his head, projected against the opposite wall, rise up, and Mr. Walter Crookes,

[1] *Spiritual Magazine*, 1860, p. 89. [2] *Ibid.*, 1860, p. 268.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1860, p. 525. [4] *Ibid.*, 1861, p. 69.
[5] *Dialectical Report*, p. 145. In a letter recounting the incident which appeared in the *Spiritual Magazine* (Sept., 1868), Mr. Jones gives the date of the séance as 17th July, 1868. He omits, however, to date his letter.

who was sitting near where Mr. Home was, said that his feet were in the air. There was no stool or other thing near which could have aided him. Moreover, the movement was a continuous glide upwards."[1]

On April 21st, 1872, we have the following record. After various minor phenomena had occurred :—

"A message was given, 'Try less light.' The handkerchief moved about along the floor, visible to all. Mr. Home nearly disappeared under the table in a curious attitude; then he was (still in his chair) wheeled out from the table, still in the same attitude, his feet out in front off the ground. He was then sitting almost horizontally, his shoulders resting on his chair. He asked Mrs. Walter Crookes to remove the chair from under him, as it was not supporting him. He was then seen to be sitting in the air, supported by nothing visible."[2]

If Mr. Enmore Jones' testimony almost constrains us to believe in hallucination, in the instances recorded by Mr. Crookes it seems more reasonable to suppose that Home may have found opportunity, in the intentionally subdued light, to introduce some mechanical support.

The most noteworthy of all the cases of levitation is that which took place on December 16th, 1868, at 5, Buckingham Gate, London, in the presence of the Master of Lindsay (now the Earl of Crawford), Viscount Adare (now the Earl of Dunraven), and Captain Wynne. The fullest account is that of the Master of Lindsay, written on July 14th, 1871. It is as follows :—

"I was sitting with Mr. Home and Lord Adare and a cousin of his. During the sitting Mr. Home went into a trance, and in that state was carried out of the window in the room next to where we were, and was brought in at our window. The distance between the windows was about seven feet six inches, and there was not the slightest foothold between them, nor was there more than a twelve-inch projection to each window, which served as a ledge to put flowers on. We heard the window in the next room lifted up, and almost immediately after we saw Home floating in the air outside our window. The moon was shining full into the room ;[3] my back was to the light, and I saw the shadow on the wall of the window-sill, and Home's feet about six inches above it. He remained in this position for a few seconds, then raised the window and glided into the room feet foremost and sat down."[4]

[1] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. vi. pp. 118, 119. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

[3] The séance took place, as said, on the 16th December, 1868, *two days after new moon.*

[4] The letter from which this account is taken originally appeared in the

Lord Adare's account of the central incident is as follows :—

"We heard Home go into the next room, heard the window thrown up, and presently Home appeared standing upright outside our window; he opened the window and walked in quite coolly."

Lord Adare adds an account of an incident at which he was the only spectator. After the levitation he had, at Home's request, shut the window in the next room, out of which Home purported to have been wafted by the spirits. On returning to the séance-room, Lord Adare continues :—

"I remarked that the window was not raised a foot, and that I could not think how he [Home] had managed to squeeze through. He arose and said, 'Come and see.' I went with him; he told me to open the window as it was before; I did so; he told me to stand a little distance off; he then went through the open space, head first, quite rapidly, his body being nearly horizontal and apparently rigid. He came in again feet foremost, and we returned to the other room. It was so dark I could not see clearly how he was supported outside. He did not appear to grasp, or rest upon the balustrade, but rather to be swung out and in. Outside each window is a small balcony or ledge nineteen inches deep [*i.e.* apparently nineteen inches wide], bounded by stone balustrades eighteen inches high."[1]

In a letter written to Home, dated 2nd February, 1877, Captain Wynne, referring to this occasion, states: "The fact of your having gone out of the one window and in at the other I can swear to."[2]

Spiritualist newspaper, and was afterwards republished in a pamphlet entitled *Psychic Power : Spirit Power : Experimental Investigation* (London, 1871). In July, 1869, Lord Lindsay gave an account of the incident to the Committee of the Dialectical Society, which runs as follows :—

"I saw the levitations in Victoria Street when Home floated out of the window. He first went into a trance and walked about uneasily; he then went into the hall. While he was away I heard a voice whisper in my ear, 'He will go out of one window and in at another.' I was alarmed and shocked at the idea of so dangerous an experiment. I told the company what I had heard and we then waited for Home's return. Shortly after he entered the room. I heard the window go up, but I could not see it, for I sat with my back to it. I, however, saw his shadow on the opposite wall; he went out of the window in a horizontal position, and I saw him outside the other window (that is the next room) floating in the air. It was eighty-five feet from the ground" (Report, p. 214).

The discrepancies between this and the account given in the text may perhaps be explained as due to inaccurate reporting. It will be seen that both accounts suggest, without expressly stating, that Home floated outside the window in a horizontal position, whereas Lord Adare states that Home stood upright.

[1] Lord Adare's testimony to this incident, in its original form difficult of access, will be found quoted in Mrs. Home's *Life*, p. 301.

[2] *Life of D. D. Home*, p. 307.

than to the detailed record of Lord Lindsay. How much that record is worth, as evidence for a miracle, the reader, with the depositions before him, may judge for himself.

The other incident presents a somewhat different problem. The room was again dark, the action was momentary, and the solitary witness, who had been told to keep his distance, was still labouring under the strong excitement induced by the previous performance. It would be impossible to lay much stress upon an observation made under such circumstances.

Unlike levitation, the phenomenon of elongation was a late product of Home's mediumship. I can find no record of its appearance before 1867. During that and two or three succeeding years several exhibitions were given, amongst the witnesses being Mr. H. D. Jencken, General Boldero, Mr. Ion Perdicaris, Lord Lindsay, and Lord Adare. The manifestation generally took place in a very subdued light. But Mr. Perdicaris has given me from memory an account of an occasion on which he saw Home elongated in a good light. The medium, however, on this occasion stood behind a chair, with his hands resting on the back, and the elongation amounted to a few inches only. Moreover, we have no contemporary record of the incident. So, in a case described by H. D. Jencken ("Honestas"), when Home held a candle in his hand whilst undergoing elongation, the apparent increase of stature amounted only to about four inches.[1]

Lord Adare, in his *Experiences*, gives several instances of elongation, some in fairly good light; but his description of the manifestation and of the means taken to ascertain the reality and measure the extent of the elongation is not such as to produce conviction. The most striking account of the phenomenon is furnished by Lord Lindsay, in his evidence before the Dialectical Society's Committee, but the narrative was written some time after the event, and does not appear, since the dates and other details are wanting, to have been based upon contemporary notes.

The following is an extract from a paper written by Lord Lindsay, read before the Committee on the 6th July, 1869:—[2]

"On another occasion I saw Mr. Home, in a trance, elongated eleven inches. I measured him standing up against the wall, and

[1] *Human Nature*, vol. ii. p. 611. See also *ibid.*, vol. i. pp. 427 and 578; vol. ii. pp. 29 and 30. In vol. iv. p. 140 is a diagram showing the elongation of Home's hand. See also the accounts by Dr. Hawkins Simpson and General Boldero (*Journal S. P. R.*, 1889, pp. 123 and 125).

[2] *Dialectical Society's Report*, p. 207.

marked the place; not being satisfied with that, I put him in the middle of the room and placed a candle in front of him, so as to throw a shadow on the wall, which I also marked. When he awoke I measured him again in his natural size, both directly and by the shadow, and the results were equal. I can swear that he was not off the ground or standing on tiptoe, as I had full view of his feet, and, moreover, a gentleman present had one of his feet placed over Home's insteps, one hand on his shoulder, and the other on his side where the false ribs come near the hip-bone."

Later, in answer to questions, Lord Lindsay supplemented his evidence as follows:—[1]

"The top of the hip-bone and the short ribs separate. In Home they were unusually close together. There was no separation of the vertebræ of the spine; nor were the elongations at all like those resulting from expanding the chest with air; the shoulders did not move. Home looked as if he was pulled up by the neck; the muscles seemed in a state of tension. He stood firmly upright in the middle of the room, and before the elongation commenced I placed my foot on his instep. I will swear he never moved his heels from the ground. When Home was elongated against the wall, Lord Adare placed his foot on Home's instep, and I marked the place on the wall. I once saw him elongated horizontally on the ground; Lord Adare was present. Home seemed to grow at both ends, and pushed myself and Adare away."

I cannot identify in Lord Adare's account of his experiences either of the occasions referred to in the passages last quoted.

The phenomenon of elongation was not peculiar to Home. As we have already seen, Herne and J. J. Morse are said to have been elongated in 1870.[2] Lord Adare tells us that at a séance at which Home was present he saw a young lady elongated to the extent of about three inches.[3] And I have lately received an account of an elongation, the medium being a professional clairvoyant named Peters, which took place so recently as May, 1900. The witnesses, who have all signed the account from which the extracts below are taken, were the Rev. C. J. M. Shaw, his wife, and brother. Peters was staying in Mr. Shaw's house, and at a sitting in the afternoon hopes had been held out of some remarkable manifestation in the evening. At the evening sitting, by direction of the "control," the shaded standard lamp by which the room was lighted was turned down very low.

[1] *Report*, pp. 213, 214. [2] See above, p. 78. [3] *Experiences*, p. 23.

Mr. C. Shaw and his brother sat in easy-chairs (seats fourteen inches from the ground) on either side of the medium, who was standing. Mrs. Shaw sat opposite, facing the medium. Mr. C. Shaw's account continues :—

"My brother placed his right foot on the medium's left foot, and I placed my left foot on the medium's right foot. (The medium was wearing ordinary boots.) And then my brother placed his right hand and I my left hand on the medium's waist, our other hands grasping (at first) the medium's hands.

"The medium's height, as measured by myself against the wall of my room, is 5 feet 7½ inches. The medium began to sway backwards and forwards (his face was towards Mrs. Shaw), sometimes falling so far backward that the back of his head nearly touched the ground. He then began to sway sideways—first one side, then the other—disengaging his hands from ours and placing them (below ours) above his hips. He then stretched his hands, with palms open, towards Mrs. Shaw, and fingers extended, straight out above his head, and with his head thrown back, the motion from side to side becoming less and less till it ceased altogether, appeared to be drawn upwards by his hands.

"Both my brother and I looked to see that we were still on his feet, and that our hands were on his waist; we were both conscious that the hands we had placed on his waist were being carried up as the elongation gradually took place. Keeping our eyes upon him, we found that we had to stretch our arms to their *fullest* extent (without rising from our seats) to retain their position on his waist. On my attempting to rise from my chair the 'Indian' requested me to remain seated. At last a point was reached when I called to my brother, 'If he goes any higher I can't reach,' my arm being stretched to its very fullest extent; at the same time I was conscious, and so was my brother, that our feet were still on the medium's feet. The Red Indian (who was controlling) called to us then to observe his hands, one arm (the hands and fingers were open and extended) being quite six inches longer than the other; from our position this was difficult for my brother and me to see, but was quite apparent to Mrs. S. Again our attention was directed to the fact that the shorter arm had been elongated to match the other. We had now arrived at the limit of our own powers of extension, and with a warning from the Indian the medium collapsed on to the floor. He subsided in a sitting position on the floor at the same point at which he was standing. Mrs. S., sitting (in front), had a good view of the whole process, and was able to note the elongation with reference to the background. When the medium's hands were first raised she saw them against the background of the red curtains of the bow window; she then noted their passing the line which marks a difference of six inches between the ceiling of the bow window and that of the room

(the ceiling of the bow window being that much lower), and finally remarked his hands against the background of the ceiling itself. Taking into consideration the distance we had to extend our arms to keep our hands on his waist, one would judge the elongation to have been at the very least a matter of eighteen inches.

"There was no breach of continuity in the clothing apparent which one might have expected. After the sitting the medium appeared much fatigued, still, he endeavoured to show us another curious phenomenon. Rubbing his face violently with both hands, long streaks of light became visible through his fingers; this I clearly remarked, but it was not noticed by the others.

"We have tried since on two occasions to obtain a repetition of the phenomenon of elongation, but without success.

"I have written this account of the matter as it presented itself to my observation, and it is difficult to see how we can have been deceived.

"I may say that the medium himself drew our attention to the unusual length of his arms, and that, as far as our knowledge of him goes, we have never had anything to cause us to doubt his integrity. The medium laid down no conditions whatever (beyond requesting that the lamp be turned down) before commencing the séance.

"When the séance commenced at 9.30 the medium occupied the chair in which Mrs. Shaw afterwards sat. At about 10.15, for the experiment in 'elongation,' he changed his position and stood.

"The only chair near I pushed away when the medium began to sway backwards and forwards, fearing he would knock himself against it.

"The curtains of the bow window follow the shape of the bow, and were distant from the medium at his back quite eight feet, and on his left side a distance of about five feet, a small inlaid writing-bureau with sloping lid separating him from the edge of the curtain on his left.

"After the medium fell, which he did in a sitting position on the floor, with his knees near to his chin, he complained of discomfort, etc., and stiffness, and asked if 'they had been elongating him.'"[1]

How far the supposed elongation in this case was pure illusion, and how far it may have been due to trickery, it is difficult to conjecture. But the description of the medium's violent swaying movements, and, still more, his attitude at the termination of the experiment, are consistent with the view that the "elongation" was effected by some simple mechanism, such as steel stilts, concealed in his boots and

[1] I received an account of this incident verbally from Mr. C. J. M. Shaw in November, 1900; the written account above quoted is dated 6th February, 1901.

trousers. That Home, however, used concealed apparatus of the kind is, I should think, improbable. The evidence in his case, either from want of detail, length of time between event and record, or the attendant circumstances, such as feebleness of illumination, is so defective that it is easier to attribute the results recorded to illusion, which Home may no doubt have eked out on occasion by such devices as slipping his feet half out of his boots and standing on tip-toe, or supporting himself on convenient articles of furniture.

I have reserved for the last what is at once the least readily explicable and the best attested of all the phenomena presented by Home. The evidence for the fire-ordeal is abundant; it is in some cases of high quality; and, from the nature of the experiment, the illumination of the room was generally more adequate than in the case of the levitations and elongations.

Mr. Crookes thus describes two occasions on which he was a witness of the fire-ordeal. The first account is extracted from a contemporary letter to Mrs. Honywood, describing a séance which took place on April 28th, 1871 :—

"At Mr. Home's request, whilst he was entranced, I went with him to the fireplace in the back drawing-room. He said, 'We want you to notice particularly what Dan is doing.' Accordingly I stood close to the fire and stooped down to it, when he put his hands in. He very deliberately pulled the lumps of hot coal off, one at a time, with his right hand, and touched one which was bright red. He then said, 'The power is not strong on Dan's hand, as we have been influencing the handkerchief most. It is more difficult to influence an inanimate body like that than living flesh, so, as the circumstances were favourable, we thought we would show you that we could prevent a red-hot coal from burning a handkerchief. We will collect more power on the handkerchief and repeat it before you. Now!'

"Mr. Home then waved the handkerchief about in the air two or three times, held it above his head, and then folded it up and laid it on his hand like a cushion; putting his other hand into the fire, he took out a large lump of cinder red-hot at the lower part, and placed the red part on the handkerchief. Under ordinary circumstances it would have been in a blaze. In about half a minute he took it off the handkerchief with his hand, saying, 'As the power is not strong, if we leave the coal longer it will burn.' He then put it on his hand and brought it to the table in the front room, where all but myself had remained seated."[1]

[1] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. vi. pp. 103, 104.

The next account is from Mr. Crookes' detailed notes of a séance which took place on the 9th of May, 1871. At the beginning of the séance the room was lit by four candles; a wood fire, somewhat dull, was burning in the grate. After various manifestations, two of the candles were extinguished. Mr. Home went to the fire, took out a piece of red-hot charcoal, which he placed on a folded cambric handkerchief, borrowed for the purpose from one of the guests. He fanned the charcoal to a white heat with his breath, but the handkerchief was only burnt in one small hole.[1] After this exhibition—

"Mr. Home again went to the fire, and after stirring the hot coal about with his hand, took out a red-hot piece nearly as big as an orange, and putting it on his right hand, covered it over with his left hand, so as to almost completely enclose it, and then blew into the small furnace thus extemporised until the lump of charcoal was nearly white-hot, and then drew my attention to the lambent flame which was flickering over the coal and licking round his fingers; he fell on his knees, looked up in a reverent manner, held up the coal in front, and said, 'Is not God good? Are not His laws wonderful?'"[2]

Amongst the other persons who have left on record their testimony to this manifestation are Lord Lindsay, Lord Adare, H. D. Jencken, W. M. Wilkinson, S. C. Hall, W. H. Harrison, Mrs. Honywood, and Miss Douglas.[3]

From the several accounts published it would appear that an exhibition of this kind, in this respect indeed resembling the levitations and the elongations, was only vouchsafed to a few privileged and, if the word may be allowed in this connection, "trained" witnesses. The experiment was obviously a delicate one, and peculiarly liable to miscarriage. Thus, it was checked on one occasion by one of the witnesses starting in alarm from his chair;[4] on another by the irruption of two uninvited witnesses;[5] it failed on two occasions at Glasgow because the conditions were "too positive," or the witnesses had too little faith.[6]

It is to be remembered, further, that though Home was the

[1] Mr. Crookes tells us that he tested the handkerchief afterwards in his laboratory, and found that it had not been chemically prepared to resist the action of fire. [2] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. vi. p. 103.

[3] See especially the *Dialectical Society's Report*; letters from "Honestas" (H. D. Jencken) in *Human Nature*, vols. ii., iii., iv.; *Journal S. P. R.* for July, 1889; *Spirit People*, by W. H. Harrison; *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, by Dr. A. R. Wallace, p. 166, etc. [4] *Life of Home*, p. 388.

[5] "Uninvited," that is, by the medium (see *Journal S. P. R.*, July, 1889, p. 126). [6] *Human Nature*, vol. iv. pp. 91 and 132.

chief exponent of this feat in modern times, it was by no means peculiar to him. In the annals of Spiritualism there are several records of similar manifestations through other mediums, chiefly in America. In England rivals in this line were rare; but I have come across a case more recent than any of Home's. In a letter dated June, 1882, Mrs. William Tebb wrote to me:—

"Only on Friday I was in a circle with five others, when one fell apparently in deep trance, and put his hands over a flame and held them for some time without apparent injury. He also held the flame close to his eyes, to our horror, and we had to beg for the fire test to be stopped. It seemed too much to risk the eyesight in such a way. The burning of the hands we had been able to bear. The man afterwards was apparently no worse."

But outside the ranks of spirit mediums there are many recorded instances. We need not go back to the Middle Ages for parallels. In the eighteenth century similar portents were exhibited both among the Cevennois[1] and the Convulsionnaires of S. Medard.[2] In more recent times there have been, and no doubt still are, European jugglers who can handle red-hot iron, and play almost incredible tricks with burning substances. Their immunity from injury is understood to be due to careful preparation, the use of alum and other chemical substances, and, generally, to the nice adaptation of means to ends. But besides these stage performances, which are obviously mere feats of skill and endurance, there is, as Mr. Andrew Lang has shown, abundant evidence in modern times of fire-ordeals of a very surprising kind amongst uncivilised, or differently civilised races. We have the testimony of educated Europeans, who have not only seen, but in some instances have actually themselves undergone the ordeal. The chief evidence comes from the Society Islands, Fiji, New Zealand, Japan, and Southern India. In some of these instances, according to the descriptions given

[1] Mr. John Cavalier, who tells the story, was present with a great multitude and saw one Clary, habited in a white streight frock, mount upon a pile of wood, light it himself, and remain there, the flames rising above his head, until the wood was quite spent and there were no more flames. There was no mark of fire on his hair or clothes (*A Cry from the Desart*. London, 1707, p. 51).

[2] Marie Sonet, called the Salamander, on several occasions, in the presence of Carré de Montgeron and others, stretched herself on two chairs over a blazing fire, and remained there for half an hour or more at a time, neither herself nor her clothing being burnt. On another occasion, however, she thrust her booted feet into a burning brazier, until the soles of both boots and stockings were reduced to a cinder, her feet remaining uninjured (P. F. Mathieu, *Histoire des Miracles, etc.*, pp. 262–6. Paris, 1864).

by the European witnesses, the heat was very great, and the period during which the subjects were exposed to it relatively considerable. The insensibility even to severe pain which accompanies states of trance and ecstasy would no doubt account for the subjective immunity of the devotees; but it will hardly explain why the skin of the bare feet and legs was not scorched by the heat which, in some cases, according to the observers, kindled green leaves and melted solder on a thermometer case. A recent account, however, of the fire-ordeal in Tahiti witnessed by Professor Langley, of the Smithsonian Institution,[1] suggests that the marvellous elements in the descriptions given by previous witnesses were possibly due mainly to defective observation. In Professor Langley's presence a native priest, followed by many other natives and ultimately by several Europeans, walked over a shallow pit filled, to the depth of about two feet, with stones, the lower layers of which were unquestionably red-hot and glowing. But Professor Langley observed that the topmost layer was far from being red-hot; that some of the stones could even be touched lightly with the hand; and that, as a matter of fact, the performers carefully picked their way, choosing apparently the coolest places. The stones were too hot for the Europeans to walk over barefooted, but not hot enough, it would seem, to injure the soles of their boots or the hardened native skin. Professor Langley's conclusion is that it was "a most clever and interesting piece of savage magic, but not a miracle"; and that the success of the performance largely depended upon the chief priest's choice of the stones, a porous basalt, which formed an extremely bad conductor of heat. This last observation is of interest in connection with Home's feats, for wood, coals, and coal-cinders form also very bad conductors, as anyone can satisfy himself by actual experiment. A coal, red-hot and blazing at one end, may be held in the bare hand without serious inconvenience, and may be placed on paper without burning it.[2] It is certainly noteworthy that the particular feat of Home's mediumship which is best attested and most difficult to explain should meet with corroborative testimony outside the pale of professional mediumship, unless we stretch that word to include Shamans, medicine-men, and Brahmin priests. But it is to be feared

[1] Letter in *Nature*, Aug. 22nd, 1901.

[2] From the pages of "Uncle Remus," no mean authority, it may be learnt that negroes will take up a live coal in their hands to light their pipes withal.

that the evidence points rather to a skilfully staged illusion than to a new fact in Nature.[1]

On the whole then, while the evidence at present adduced must, I submit, be held insufficient to substantiate the preter-human or, at lowest, preternormal power over material nature claimed for Home and other mediums, it seems possible that the marvels reported were in some cases something more than mere conjuring tricks. At a conjuring performance the spectator's judgment is fooled, but his actual perceptions are probably unimpaired; there is fallacy, but it is of inference and interpretation, not of the senses.[2] In the performances, especially of Home, there appears at times to have been an actual sense-deception, of the type which is commonly known as illusion rather than hallucination; a sense-deception, that is, in which the foundation is laid by impressions received from the world without, though the superstructure may be of imagination all compact. When Lord Lindsay and his friends saw Home elongated or levitated, their perceptive faculties, it is suggested, were misled, in much the same way as Dr. Stoney's friend was misled, when he saw the imaginary tricycle accident, or the spectator at a materialisation séance when he greets the medium dressed up in a white sheet and a nightcap as his grand-

[1] For the evidence as to the fire-ordeal in modern times see Mr. Lang's *Modern Mythology* (1897), chap. xii.; *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xv. p. 2, article by Mr. Lang on "The Fire Walk," and the references there given. See also *Annales des Sciences Psychiques* for July and August, 1899, article by Dr. Pascal on "Les Dompteurs du Feu"; and *Journal S. P. R.*, November, 1900. The latter contains several descriptions of the feat as performed in India; and, in one or two of the instances there described, it would appear that the apparent immunity of the devotees may have been due to careful training and the use of certain skilfully devised precautions. But it is difficult to account in this way for Colonel Gudgeon's experience, who walked in a leisurely way and barefooted with three other Europeans over twelve feet of stones hot enough to bake bread; or for the ceremony at Fiji described by Dr. T. M. Hocken, F.L.S. (both these cases are quoted in Mr. Lang's article above referred to). In an article by R. C. Caldwell on "Demonolatry and Devil Worship" (*Contemporary Review*, Feb., 1876) a case is recorded in which the fire test failed. The priest in this case poured a cauldron of molten lead on his head, and died a few days later from the effects.

[2] It is possible, however, that even in an ordinary conjuring trick there may be sensory hallucination. Thus, when the conjurer pretends to throw the borrowed ring across the stage, he moves his arm as in the act of throwing, and straightway a responsive tinkle is heard from the basin in which the ring is supposed to fall. That at the time the more suggestive spectators actually see the flash of the jewel in its imaginary transit would be difficult to prove; but it is certain that many of them will be found afterwards to have the fallacious memory of having seen it. See Jastrow, *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, p. 117, and the article by Mr. Triplett on the "Psychology of Conjuring Deceptions" there quoted. Mr. Triplett found that 78 children out of 165 whom he tested had the hallucinatory memory of seeing a ball thrown up in the air and disappear.

mother, or as the French sailors were deceived when they mistook the branch of a tree for a raft crowded with their shipwrecked comrades.

The conditions—the subdued light, the emotional stress and expectancy of the sitters—were propitious for sense-deceptions of this kind; and one other factor, illustrated by the example last quoted, may also have contributed to the result. The group of French sailors no doubt assisted and encouraged each other in the erroneous interpretation of what they saw, each contributing some fresh item of confirmation or enlargement. Something of the kind seems liable to occur in any group of persons occupied with common objects of thought or dominated by a common emotion. The ingenious French writer from whom the illustration is borrowed has propounded the theory that in any such group of human beings there is a psychic contagion at work which tends to produce uniformity in action and judgment. And not only, he argues, will the resulting acts and beliefs tend to be uniform, but they will represent the instinctive and subconscious rather than the rational elements of the individual minds composing the group. That a crowd is always more impulsive, more credulous, and more readily suggestible than the average of the individuals composing it is proved by the epidemic enthusiasms and epidemic hallucinations which are recorded at various periods of the world's history to have seized upon large groups of persons, most of whom probably if left to their individual initiative would have been shrewd enough or inert enough to resist the impulse.[1] M. Le Bon's theory was not apparently suggested by experience of spiritualist séances; but such experience certainly lends support to his speculations. After hours of waiting in the semi-darkness, in strained expectation, the hesitancy of the more cautious sitters may, it is conjectured, sometimes be overborne, and the unanimous testimony to the ensuing marvels reflect the hasty inferences and irresponsible judgment of the least critical of the spectators.

If such quasi-hallucinations did in fact occur at Home's séances, his unusual success in producing them may have been due to one of two causes, or to both in combination: to his own impressive power, or to the impressibility of his sitters. As regards the second point, it has already been remarked that the spectators of these higher marvels were

[1] Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologie des Foules*. Paris, 1895.

few, and obviously selected with great care. The success of the fire-ordeal in particular appears to have depended very closely on the quality of the spectators. Moreover, there is a good deal of evidence to show that those who were admitted to Home's séances were highly susceptible to suggestions of various kinds, occasionally taking the form of actual hallucination. Both Lord Adare and the Master of Lindsay constantly saw figures which were unquestionably not material in the dim light of the séance-room. The Master of Lindsay and others saw the successive colours of the rainbow, and afterwards the picture of a landscape, in a crystal placed on Home's head;[1] it is noteworthy that at one of the sub-committee's séances with Home the Master of Lindsay's left arm became quite rigid.[2] Others of the attendants at Home's séances appear to have been hardly less impressible. The Hon. Mrs. E. and others saw at a dark séance troops of phantom figures, lights, and spirit eyes, all of which were invisible to another witness, Mrs. Honywood.[3] Lady D. is reported to have seen the apparition of a magnificent white flower, as large as a dinner-plate, with long purple stamens.[4] H. D. Jencken mentions having seen strangers to Home entranced at his séances.[5]

There are, then, some grounds for supposing that the habitués of Home's séances exhibited a suggestibility and a tendency to hallucination above the common. Partly this was due, it is likely, to peculiarities of temperament in the witnesses. But it seems possible that in part it may have been due to some power possessed by Home in common with other mediums. Madame Blavatsky appears to have possessed on occasion the power of causing the persons in her train to see visions and dream dreams.[6] And two or

[1] *Dialectical Report*, pp. 206, 259.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 49. Note also that in his evidence the Master of Lindsay stated that in youth he had at one time been subject to the hallucination of a black dog (*Report*, p. 216).

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 128, 367.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 328. The evidence in this case is second-hand.

[5] *Human Nature*, vol. ii. pp. 88 and 144. H. D. Jencken elsewhere states that on one occasion Home, after passing into the trance, went round the circle "mesmerising" the sitters. He then announced that he was about to be elongated, and they saw him elongated accordingly (quoted in Home's *Incidents in my Life*, Second Series, p. 177). At Mr. Crookes' séances some of those present saw hands which were invisible to Mr. Crookes himself; and General Boldero, in a letter to his wife, describing a séance with Home, writes that the ladies said they saw hands, "I myself saw something, but cannot exactly describe what it was" (*S. P. R. Journal*, July, 1889, p. 125).

[6] See a *Modern Priestess of Isis*, Solovyoff, translated by Walter Leaf, pp. 79-81.

three persons have testified to having seen hallucinatory figures and heard sounds, which may also have been hallucinatory, in company of Miss Freer.[1] There is, then, some evidence for the view that a medium's equipment may include a faculty of inducing false perception in his clients.

[1] See instances given in *The Alleged Haunting of B—— House.* London, 1899.

find it, to go no further back than the early years of the nineteenth century, in the unquestioning acceptance by Kerner and other German observers of the dubious feats performed by Madame Hauffe and kindred somnambules; in the eagerness shown by the French magnetisers, from Tardy du Montravel, Billot, and Deleuze, down to Luys, Gibier, Baraduc, and de Rochas, to accept apports, radiant fluids, magnetic transfer, exteriorisation of sensation, and any other marvels which their subjects might present to their notice.

So, in the beginning of the Spiritualist Movement in America, Rogers, J. Bovee Dods, Richmond, and others, who believed in psychic force only, were hardly more exacting of evidence for the monstrous legends to which they gave credence than the more numerous sect who saved themselves much mental labour by referring all the alleged marvels to spirits. The like, as we have shown, may be said of Bray, Atkinson, and Serjeant Cox in our own country, and of contemporary observers on the Continent. We find evidence of the same predisposition in the constant attribution by Spiritualists of mediumistic powers to professional conjurers, and in the ingenious hypotheses put forward to explain away materialisation fiascoes.

The benefit of this half-conscious expectation of the marvellous was extended, of course, to any commonplace trickster who chose to call himself a "medium," but from the published records it seems clear that the most successful performers have been those who possessed special gifts, or employed special artifices, to enhance this latent predisposition. We have already dwelt upon the personal fascination which seems to have been exercised by Home, and the blind confidence in his honesty which he seems to have been able to inspire. A prepossessing manner and an effect of frankness seem to have characterised Foster,[1] Slade, and his manager, Simmons,[2] and may be observed in Duguid and many living mediums. Again, in the case of young girls and children, personal beauty or the apparent ingenuousness of childhood no doubt played their part in disarming criticism.

More potent means to the same end were, for most minds, the various devices employed for trading on the affections or exciting the religious emotions. Of the part played by personation of the dead, and messages to the bereaved from

[1] See various accounts of interviews with Foster printed in the *Spiritual Magazine* for 1862.

[2] See *e.g.* the interview with Slade in the *World*, 30th Aug., 1876.

the spirit world, it is not necessary to speak. But the religious bait, though rarely so conspicuous, was probably not less effective. The Davenport Brothers, as we have seen, carried in their train the Rev. J. B. Ferguson, an eloquent preacher and enthusiastic convert. Many mediums, as we have seen in the case of Home, arrived at the same result by interspersing with physical phenomena religious rhapsodies and exhortations to a higher morality.

But, after all, the most valuable asset of a medium is the trust inspired by his position and reputation. Even when repeated exposures had made it difficult, for the more intelligent Spiritualist at any rate, to uphold through evil and good report the honesty of the professional psychic, their faith in the private medium remained for long unshaken. It was on the phenomena occurring in the presence of private mediums that the late Professor Sidgwick laid most stress, not merely because of the presumption against the existence in their case of that laboriously acquired skill in legerdemain to which it was reasonable to attribute the performance in the case of professionals, but also, and mainly, because of the absence of the grosser motives to fraud.[1]

An attitude of receptivity towards marvels occurring in the presence or through the agency of persons of presumed honesty is not merely natural, but within limits reasonable. My own experience supplies me with an apt illustration of the prepotent influence in such circumstances of a belief in the good faith of the performer. About fifteen years ago[2] some persons of my acquaintance described to me a curious feat performed by one of their friends. The gentleman in question, Mr. C——, possessed, they assured me, a peculiar magnetic force, which enabled him to exercise attraction on objects made of iron. I was invited to meet Mr. C—— a few days later, and after some urgency on my part he consented to give me an exhibition of his powers. Taking the poker from the hearth, he seated himself, and placed the poker upright between his outstretched knees, with its knob resting on the ground. The poker remained at first poised in a vertical position, without any apparent support, and then gently inclined to one side or the other, following the guidance of a finger held two or three inches above it. I accepted the phenomenon in all good faith, as an instance

[1] See his first presidential address to the S.P.R. (*Proc.*, vol. i. p. 7), also vol. i. p. 249; iv. p. 103, etc.

[2] I have unfortunately destroyed my notes of this incident, and relate it from memory.

of a hitherto unsuspected magnetic power latent in the human organism; and it was not until some days later that I learnt from another source the secret of the trick—a loop of human hair attached to the trousers of the operator.

In this case the attitude of unquestioning acceptance which I displayed was due mainly to the assurance previously given me by my hosts (one at least of whom, as I have since learnt, was in the secret) that the performance was not of the nature of conjuring, but a genuine display of abnormal powers. That the means taken in this instance to prepare my mind for the exhibition went beyond the bounds of permissible mystification I am not prepared to say. But in a case recorded by Professor Sidgwick, where a trick of a similar nature was performed on many occasions, in presence of different witnesses, by a gentleman of good social position and some scientific standing, there can be no question that the limits of honour and fair dealing were overstepped. The performer, not content with repeated verbal assurances to that effect, ultimately signed a formal declaration that the phenomena had "not been produced by normal means."[1]

In these two cases the receptivity of the spectators was based mainly on reliance on the ordinary laws governing social intercourse. But when the personal vanity of the witness is more directly implicated, as in the case of a master who has vaunted the marvels performed by his servant; or when, as between near relatives, the affections are strongly engaged, this receptivity frequently amounts to infatuation. A striking instance of this frame of mind is given by Sir John Forbes.[2] One A. B., a lawyer, invited Forbes to test the clairvoyance of his office boy, George Goble. Forbes, after two or three meetings, conclusively exposed the trickery employed, and Goble, in the presence of his master and others, confessed the imposture. But, after Sir John's departure, the boy pretended that his confession had been extracted from him in mesmeric trance, that he was innocent of conscious imposture, and proceeded to demonstrate, to his master's complete satisfaction, that his clairvoyant powers were in the main genuine.[3]

[1] Some account of this case is given in the *Journal S. P. R.*, July, 1894.

[2] *Illustrations of Modern Mesmerism.* London, 1845.

[3] See also in this connection the account given by Forbes of the exposure of the deception employed by Miss Martineau's servant Jane; and compare Miss Martineau's own comments on the subject (*Autobiography*, third edition, vol. ii., p. 198, etc.) Another striking illustration is given above, pp. 91–94.

One of my colleagues on the Council of the S.P.R. has related to me a similar case. Some years since he was asked to investigate the mediumship of two children. After a more or less prolonged inquiry he succeeded in ascertaining that systematic trickery had been practised; trickery of an unusually daring and complicated kind, involving records of a permanent nature which could not be explained away. He obtained confession from the children, and laid his proofs before the father and elder brother, the former a well-known professional man. Their confidence in the children was shaken for the time; but the effect lasted only for a day or two, and then the habit of belief, rooted as it was in the affections, resumed possession. In my own experience I have met with more than one case of the kind, (though I am unfortunately withheld from giving full details) in which, conclusive proof having been obtained of fraud on the part of a private medium, the other members of the circle have chosen to retain their belief in the medium and his phenomena, at the cost of deliberately closing eyes and ears to the incriminating evidence.

In the case which is now to be discussed the medium united all the advantages above referred to. He possessed the friendship and perfect trust of his sitters; he was aided by the religious emotions inspired by his trance utterances; he could appeal to an unstained character and the record of a life of honourable activity.

William Stainton Moses,[1] known for many years to

[1] The account of Stainton Moses' life and work given in the text is derived, apart from the author's personal knowledge of the subject of the memoir and conversation with some of his friends, from the following sources:—

(*a*) The medium's own publications: *Psychography*, London, 1878; *Spirit Identity*, 1879; *Higher Aspects of Spiritualism*, 1880; and the *Spirit Teachings*, which, originally published in 1883, were reprinted after his death in a *Memorial Edition* (London, 1894), with a short biographical notice by Mr. Charlton Speer, the son of the Dr. Speer mentioned in the text. This latter work will be referred to hereafter as the *Memorial Edition*.

(*b*) A series of articles, "Records of Private Séances," which appeared in the Spiritualist newspaper *Light* in the years 1892, 1893, the earlier portion being under Moses' own editorship and supervision. These records consisted of contemporary notes of the séances made by Mrs. Speer, and of portions of Stainton Moses' own fuller and more finished reports of the same sittings

(*c*) Two articles by Mr. F. W. H. Myers, in *Proceedings S. P. R.*, vols. ix. and xi., entitled "The Experiences of W. Stainton Moses." In these articles Mr. Myers included much evidence heretofore unpublished, the chief items being extracts from Mr. Moses' MS. note-books, testimonials to character, and reports of séances from private friends.

(*d*) From 1874 onwards Mr. Moses was a frequent contributor to the various Spiritualist periodicals, chiefly *Human Nature*, the *Spiritualist*, and *Light*; but I have not found it practicable, from the limits of space, to refer in detail to these contributions.

Spiritualists all over the world under his pseudonym of "M.A., Oxon.," was born in November, 1839, at Donington,[1] in Lincolnshire, his father being head master of the Grammar School there. At Bedford Grammar School, which he entered in his sixteenth year, he carried off several prizes, and ultimately an exhibition. He matriculated at Exeter College, Oxford, at Michaelmas, 1858, taking a third class in Classical Moderations at Michaelmas, 1860. Shortly before his final examination his health unfortunately broke down, and he was compelled to go abroad for a year to recruit, and content himself with a pass degree. On leaving Oxford he was ordained, and from 1863 to 1870 acted as a curate, first in the Isle of Man and later in the West of England. Towards the end of this period his health, never apparently robust, again failed, and an affection of the throat finally compelled him to give up parish work. In 1870 accordingly he came up to London, and took up his residence with some friends, Dr. and Mrs. Stanhope Speer, acting as tutor to their young son. In 1871 or 1872 he obtained the appointment of English master in University College School, which he held until 1889, when failing health compelled him to retire. He died in 1892. His constitution during the last few years of his life appears to have almost completely broken down. He suffered from extreme depression and nervous prostration, and severe neuralgic pains. The immediate cause of his death, it is understood, was Bright's disease. Alike as a parish clergyman, a schoolmaster, and a private tutor, he seems to have discharged his duties efficiently and conscientiously, and to the day of his death he retained the respect and often the warm regard of those who were brought into contact with him.

But the foregoing brief account expresses but one side of the life of Stainton Moses. In the spring of 1872, at the instance of his friend Mrs. Speer, he read R. Dale Owen's book, *The Debatable Land*. Much impressed with what he read, he visited alone or in company with the Speers various mediums, Lottie Fowler, Williams, and Home being the chief, and sat in many private circles. Soon he developed mediumistic powers of his own, which manifested themselves first in physical phenomena, later in automatic writing. He rapidly came to the front of the spiritualistic movement, took a large part in founding the British National Associa-

[1] So Mr. Myers (*Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. ix. p. 248). In the *Dictionary of National Biography* the name is spelt "Dorrington." There are places of either name in Lincolnshire.

tion of Spiritualists, served on the Council of the Psychological Society, and until 1886, when he resigned because of the Society's attitude towards Eglinton and other public mediums, on that of the Society for Psychical Research, and was president, from 1884 until his death, of the London Spiritual Alliance. He also acted for many years as the editor of *Light*. It may be claimed for him, indeed, that he was at once the most prominent figure in the domestic activities of the Spiritualist movement; the ablest and most respected champion of the Spiritualist position; and in his own person an exponent of the various phases of mediumistic power second only to Home himself.

Of the chief events of Moses' mediumship we have fortunately very full records. From June, 1872, he sat regularly for some years, sometimes as frequently as four or five times a week, with his two old friends, Dr. and Mrs. Speer; Mr. F. W. Percival and a few other specially favoured persons being from time to time admitted to the circle. Of the happenings at these circles we have in the first place an account by the medium himself, compiled, since during many of the manifestations he was entranced and oblivious of what was taking place, largely from information supplied to him by the other witnesses; we have also an account by Mrs. Speer, somewhat briefer as regards the physical phenomena, but adequate; and a still briefer and more fragmentary record, covering a portion only of the period, from Dr. Speer. There are also a few independent accounts by Mr. Percival, Mr. Charlton T. Speer, and others, not regular members of the circle. These documents are fairly concordant; the most noticeable difference being that the medium himself records many details, which do not appear in the other accounts, of tests and corroborative circumstances.[1]

From Mrs. Speer's account it would appear that up to the middle of August, 1872, the phenomena observed consisted exclusively of raps and movements of the table with contact.[2] On the 30th July the raps showed intelligence for the first time, and answered the questions of the sitters. On the 17th of August of the same year, after an intermission of about two weeks, Moses joined the Speers at Douglas,

[1] Two or three instances of this kind are quoted in the footnotes on this and subsequent pages.

[2] Moses (*Light*, 23rd Jan. 1892) records, however, that on the 12th June, 1872, at a séance at which Mrs. Speer and her two cousins were present with him, well-marked movements of the table were observed *without contact of any kind*.

Isle of Man. That evening there were loud and frequent raps at the séance, and forty-nine spirits announced their presence. On the following morning, Sunday, "a butter-knife was lifted out of a deep glass butter-dish and thrown down upon the table, no visible hand near it."[1] Later in the day a memorable manifestation took place, which is thus recorded by Dr. Speer:—

"On Sunday morning, August 18th, 1872, my wife and family, and the Rev. W. Moses, who had only arrived on Friday night, went to St. George's Church, Douglas, Isle of Man. On returning the latter went into his bedroom, and immediately came out and called me to witness the manner in which, during his absence, certain articles of toilet, etc., to wit, a writing-case, a fly-book, and a pocket note-book, had been symmetrically placed on the centre of the bed. We at once noticed the crucial appearance exhibited and hazarded a guess as to the intention thereof. We left the room and shortly after returned, when we found that a skull-cap lying on the chest of drawers had been placed on the bed-post, while the clerical white collar, which Mr. M. had removed not many minutes before, had been placed like a halo around the upper portion of the developing cross. (It should here be noticed that our express surmises as to the design apparently in progress were confirmed by various loud, distinct raps on the foot-board.) We again left the room for a time, and found that now the lower limb of the cross had been lengthened by the addition of two ivory-backed clothes-brushes. We descended to dinner, having locked the door and taken the key with us.[2] After dinner, and while sitting round the table at dessert, the conversation naturally (on the children leaving) reverted to these extraordinary proceedings, when immediately manifestations commenced all around Mr. Moses—raps on the table, thuds on the floor, raps, loud and repeated, on the back of his chair. A tune played on the table with my fingers was accurately imitated; the table with all on it was moved out of its place and everything shaken. This was put a stop to by request, but the milder phenomena persisted, and, it may be said once for all, continued till nine p.m. Mr. M. suggested that I should go up to his room again. I did so, and found, on *unlocking* the door, that two paper-knives had been placed like rays to the right and left of the cross-bar of the cross. I again locked the door, put the key in my pocket, and came downstairs. In about half an hour we returned and found that two additional articles had been appended. We again left and locked the door, and on return after another half-hour the cross had been fully developed into halo and rays, while the skull-cap had been placed above all as in a crown."[3]

[1] Mrs. Speer, in *Light*, Feb. 13th, 1892. Moses (*ibid.*) says the butter-knife was "thrown on the table *under the eyes of us all.*"

[2] Moses says (*Light*, 13th Feb., 1892) that *Dr. Speer* locked the door and put the key in his pocket.

[3] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. ix. p. 265.

On the 22nd August Moses' hand wrote automatically, for the first time in séance. On the 19th of the following month "direct" writing was obtained. A piece of paper was placed under the table in the dark, and when the gas was lighted a message was found signed "Imperator."[1] Direct writing was afterwards obtained on several occasions, amongst the spirits who thus communicated being Charles Louis Napoleon Buonaparte.

On the 19th December, 1872, the controlling spirit, "Imperator," spoke (in the darkness) in the direct voice. Thereafter this manifestation also was of frequent occurrence.

On December 31st yet another new manifestation was vouchsafed. Hitherto the medium alone had been privileged to see spirit lights and phantom forms at the circle. On this occasion both Dr. and Mrs. Speer saw a large cross of light behind the medium's head, and later "a line of light of great brilliancy, reaching several feet high and moving from side to side."[2] This column of light was seen again on May 11th, 1873. But on May 25th Mrs. Speer records that globe-shaped lights floated about the room; and from this date onwards the spirit lights seen, as described by both Dr. and Mrs. Speer, were mostly globular, about the size of an orange, or rather larger. Mrs. Speer first describes these lights in detail in notes of a sitting held on 23rd June, 1873:—

"This evening we were told to sit for spirit lights. We sat in a large upstairs room communicating with a smaller one; the door between the rooms was left open, a curtain drawn across, and a large square opening made in it at the top part of the curtain. Mr. S. M. sat in the small room, Dr. S. and Mrs. S. in the larger one, at a small table just outside the curtain. Mr. S. M. was quickly entranced, and remained so for an hour. During that time many beautiful spirit lights appeared through the aperture of the curtain; some were very large, and shaped like the egg of an ostrich and quite as large. The colour varied; some resembled pure moonlight, others had a blue tinge, while others were dazzlingly bright. They suddenly appeared at the opening, moved around, and then vanished, when another kind would come, to disappear in the same mysterious manner. Musical sounds then came around us. Both rooms were often quite illuminated through the brightness of the lights."[3]

[1] *Light*, 13th Feb., 1892. Moses adds (*Light*, 27th Feb.) that before placing the paper under the table he tore off a corner and handed it to Dr. Speer, in order to identify the paper subsequently. On the manner in which this "test" can be evaded see the account of a similar test with Duguid (above, pp. 86–7).

[2] *Ibid.*, 12th March, 1892. Dr. Speer adds, "This column of light I placed my hand upon, as seen upon the wall" (*Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. ix. p. 297).

[3] *Ibid.*, 30th July, 1892.

The only other physical phenomena calling for special notice are the musical sounds. At first the only sounds were raps and blows. But in the early months of 1873 "electrical" sounds were heard. On March 24th Mrs. Speer records the occurrence of a sound which Dr. Speer likened to the notes of a stringed instrument sounding in the air.[1] Thereafter musical sounds developed rapidly in frequency and variety. In September, 1874, Mrs. Speer gives a detailed catalogue of them, enumerating ten or more varieties, including the harp, tambourine, fairy-bells, and various stringed instruments, and ascribing their production to eight different spirits. Amongst these disembodied musicians, it is interesting to note, was that most versatile spirit Benjamin Franklin.[2]

From this brief sketch of the physical manifestations it will be clear that the mediumship of Stainton Moses, in this aspect at all events, added nothing to the evidence for Spiritualism. If we leave out of the account for the moment the difficulties involved in the supposition that a man of his character and antecedents should lend himself to trickery, there is nothing in the manifestations produced in his presence to suggest any other explanation. All that was done has been done again and again by fraudulent mediums and naughty children, and done under conditions much less favourable. Stainton Moses had the advantage of darkness more complete than that afforded to most mediums. For the greater part of the long period under review his only sitters were two old friends, to whom the bare suspicion of dishonesty on the part of their tried and trusted fellow-worker, the man whom they had selected to be the tutor of their son, would have seemed a monstrous thing. No tests of any kind were imposed, and the controlling spirit, speaking through the mouth of the medium, sternly repressed any attempt in that direction.[3] The introduction of strangers was also discouraged;[4] and though a few

[1] *Light*, 11th June, 1892. [2] *Ibid.*, 28th Jan., 1893.

[3] Here is one instance. On Sunday, 1st December, 1872, Dr. Speer had suggested, whilst a spirit message was being rapped out, that all hands should be removed from the table. The manifestations at once ceased, and were not resumed that evening. "Imperator" failed to attend at the next two sittings; and being questioned on his reappearance, on Sunday the 8th, as to the reason for his silence, "he alluded"—to quote Mrs. Speer's notes—"to the time when Dr. S. wished for a test in the middle of a sentence. The medium and myself thought it unwise and unnecessary, hence the inharmony. We then asked, 'Were you offended with Dr. S.?' 'Yes' (was rapped out very decidedly)" (*Light*, 5th March, 1892).

[4] See Mrs. Speer's record of 15th December, 1872: "'Imperator' was most indignant that we had allowed a stranger into our séance-room."

favoured persons were admitted later, their presence seemed to exercise an injurious influence over the physical manifestations, so that the phenomena were often limited to elevating discourse from "Imperator."[1]

It was hardly to be expected that in a circle constituted as described actual proofs of fraud should come to light. But it is noteworthy that even in the records written by the Speer family, under the influence of a strong prepossession in favour of the medium, there are many suspicious circumstances. Thus Dr. Speer records that on one occasion, stretching out his hand in the dark, he encountered another hand in the middle of the table, where no hand should have been: the medium ostensibly sitting at some distance from the table.[2] The spirit lights are described as hard, round, and cold to the touch, a description consistent with the supposition that they consisted of round bottles of phosphorised oil. At some of the early séances Dr. and Mrs. Speer were requested to rub their hands together quickly when the lights appeared, in order to generate power—a device which might naturally suggest itself to a trickster as a convenient means of checking the impulses of unseasonable curiosity.[3] It is to be noted further that hands, and occasionally a forearm, were seen holding the lights.[4] Again, in a passage to which my attention was directed by Dr. Hodgson, we have the record—by the medium himself—of what appears to have been a miscarriage to the bottle of phosphorised oil. After describing the appearance of several large lights, Mr. Moses writes:—

"Suddenly there arose from below me, apparently under the table, or near the floor, right under my nose, a cloud of luminous smoke, just like phosphorus. It fumed up in great clouds, until I seemed to be on fire, and rushed from the room in a panic. I was fairly frightened, and could not tell what was happening. I rushed to the door and opened it, and so to the front door. My hands seemed to be ablaze, and left their impress on the door and handles. It blazed for a while after I had touched it, but soon went out, and no smell or trace remained. . . . There seemed to be no end of smoke. It smelt distinctly phosphoric, but the smell evaporated as soon as I got out of the room into the air."[5]

[1] See especially Mrs. Speer's records of the séances to which Mr. Percival was admitted in the summer of 1873.
[2] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. ix. p. 314.
[3] *Light*, 13th Aug., 1892; *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. ix. p. 323, etc.
[4] *Ibid.*, 13th Aug., 1892; *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. ix. p. 317, etc.
[5] *Ibid.*, vol. xi. p. 45.

caster'"; and added later that his christian name was "Ben." As a matter of fact the whole of these particulars, given at the séance at the end of February, are to be found in the notice of the death in the *Daily Telegraph* of January 15th preceding.[1]

The case is typical. Mr. Moses' spirits habitually furnished accurate obituaries, or gave such other particulars of their lives as could be gathered from the daily papers, from published biographies, or from the *Annual Register* and other works of reference. All the spirits, indeed, gave their names, with one exception—an exception so significant that the case is worth recording. The *Pall Mall Gazette* for February 21st, 1874, contains the following item of intelligence: "A cabdriver out of employment this morning threw himself under a steam-roller which was being used in repairing the road in York Place, Marylebone, and was killed immediately." Mr. Moses was present at a séance that evening, and his hand was controlled, ostensibly by the spirit of the unhappy suicide, to write an account of the incident, and to draw a rough picture of a horse attached to a vehicle. The name of the dead man, it will be seen, does not appear in the newspaper account, and out of the thirty-eight spirits who gave proofs of their identity through the mediumship of Mr. Moses this particular spirit alone chose to remain anonymous.[2]

No account of the life of Stainton Moses could be complete without some notice of his *Spirit Teachings*, a series of automatic writings which began in March, 1872, and continued uninterruptedly for ten years from that date, and with lessened frequency down to the time of his death. At first cramped and hesitating, the writing soon came to flow readily, and, according to his own statement, without any conscious intervention on the part of the mortal penman. Indeed, Moses tells us that he was able to read a book or otherwise occupy his mind during their production. The communications were in different handwritings and purported to proceed from different spirits, of whom "Imperator," the guiding spirit at the physical séances, was the chief. The original writings, which fill twenty-four note-books, were left to Moses' literary executors at his death, and are still,

[1] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xi. pp. 75 and 89.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. xi. p. 77. In a former work, *Studies in Psychical Research*, pp. 125–33, I have given a detailed analysis of these alleged spirit messages received by Mr. Stainton Moses. To that account I would refer the reader who desires further information on the subject.

misdeeds, and from which the only escape lies in retracing the steps and in cultivating the qualities which shall bear fruit in love and knowledge of God.

"Of punishment we know indeed, but it is not the vindictive lash of an angry God, but the natural outcome of conscious sin, remediable by repentance and atonement and reparation personally wrought out in pain and shame, not by coward cries for mercy and by feigned assent to statements which ought to create a shudder."[1]

The matter is, no doubt, well expressed, and, as the medium himself said of the discourse from which the extract is taken, it seems rational, if not in accordance with popular conceptions of Christian doctrine. But it needed not that a spirit should descend from the seventh sphere—such in effect was "Imperator's" position—to preach views which could be heard from any Unitarian pulpit.

Here is another extract, undated, but written apparently a little later in the same year, descriptive of the triumph of Spiritualism. The style shows "Imperator" at his best:—

"We tell you, friend, that the end draws nigh. It shall not be always so. As it was in the days which preceded the coming of the Son of Man, as it has been in the midnight hours which precede every daydawn from on high, so it is now. The night of ignorance is fast passing away. The shackles which priestcraft has hung around struggling souls shall be knocked off; and in place of fanatical folly and ignorant Pharisaism and misty speculation you shall have a reasonable religion and a divine faith. You shall have richer views of God, truer notions of your duty and destiny; you shall know that they whom you call dead are alive amongst you; living, as they lived on earth, only more really; ministering to you with undiminished love; animated in their unwearying intercourse with the same affection which they bore to you whilst they were yet incarned.

"It was said of the Christ that He brought life and immortality to light. It is true in a wider sense than the writer meant. The outcome of the revelation of Christ, which is only now beginning to be seen amongst men, is, in its truest sense, the abolition of death, the demonstration of immortality. In the great truth—man never dies, cannot die, *however he may wish it*—in that great truth rests the key to the future. The immortality of man, held not as an article of faith, a clause in a creed, but as a piece of personal knowledge and individual experience, this is the keynote of the religion of the future. In its trail come all the grand truths we teach, all the noblest conceptions of duty, the grandest views of destiny, the truest realisations of life.

[1] *Memorial Edition*, pp. 77, 78.

"You cannot grasp them now. They daze and bewilder your spirit, unaccustomed to such a glare. But mark well, friend, brief space shall pass before you recognise in our words the lineaments of truth, the aspect of the divine. + IMPERATOR."[1]

The doctrines taught were, of course, not novel, nor such as need lay claim to celestial inspiration. They were the common property of a considerable group of thinkers at that time who, whilst retaining a belief in a future life, found themselves unable to accept the popular interpretation of the Christian tradition; they are to be found in particular in all the Spiritualist writings, from the *Great Harmonia* of Andrew Jackson Davis to the *Debatable Land* of Robert Dale Owen, which had formed the medium's propædeutic in mediumistic lore. With Moses, indeed, as a man of good education, the ideas are clothed in more becoming form, the whole teaching is more consistent and reasonable than with most of his predecessors. The style rarely effervesces, on the one hand, with sounding rhetoric and sparkling incoherence, nor degenerates, on the other, into bald commonplace. The writings are surprisingly uniform in their sober rationalism, are characterised by the loftiest ethical pretensions and by something like genuine religious fervour. But, after all, as with most automatic utterances, the thought is lacking in definiteness, as the language in which it is embodied is lacking in distinction. We meet with the continual repetition of similar sentiments, clothed in almost identical words. After a few pages of the kind of stuff above quoted we find we are no forwarder with the argument, and we see no particular reason why "Imperator" should not go on for ever, like a recurring decimal. Of mundane literature the *Spirit Teachings* most resemble sermons, but they are not amongst the best of their class.

Such, in brief, were the works of the Reverend William Stainton Moses. It remains to construct, if we can, an intelligible conception of the man. It seems to me clear, as I have tried to show, that there is nothing in the nature of either the physical or the mental phenomena described to require the operation of any supernormal agency. And in default of any sufficient evidence from other sources that physical manifestations of this kind are ever due to such hypothetical agencies, it seems reasonable to conclude that all the marvels reported at the séances were, in fact, produced by the medium's own hands: that it was he who tilted the table and produced the raps; that the scents, the seed pearls,

[1] *Memorial Edition*, p. 133.

and the Parian statuettes were brought into the room in his pockets; and that the spirit lights were, in fact, nothing more than bottles of phosphorised oil. Nor would the feats described have required any special skill on the medium's part. With the exception of the spirit lights—the preparation of which in the circle as constituted probably involved little risk—the things done are all such as tricky children and novices generally have practised for generations past on their credulous friends. I doubt if this Moses could have competed with Jannes and Jambres.

But here the real difficulties of the case begin. That Stainton Moses, being apparently of sane mind, should deliberately have entered upon a course of systematic and cunningly concerted trickery, for the mere pleasure of mystifying a small circle of friends, or in the hope of any petty personal advantage, such, for instance, as might be found in the enhanced social importance attaching to a position midway between prestidigitator and prophet—this is scarcely credible. The whole course of his previous life as a hard-working parish priest, his contemporary career in the world outside as a successful and respected schoolmaster, the apparently sincere religious feeling shown in the *Spirit Teachings*, all combine to contradict such a supposition. Nor is it readily conceivable that such a petty swindler would have carried on the dull details of his chicanery to the end, and have even left behind him, amongst his profitless records, fresh mystifications whose consummation he could not hope to see.[1]

The annals of apocryphal literature no doubt furnish some kind of parallel. The author of the *Travels of Sir John Mandeville* kept his secret to the end; John Payne Collier died protesting the genuineness of his second folio; Poggio Bracciolini and his contemporaries never revealed the mystery of those "brown Greek manuscripts" which it was their good fortune to discover in such suspicious abundance. All these no doubt found a sufficient reward in the mystification of their public, or the mortification of their rivals. But such an explanation hardly seems to fit Stainton Moses.

It is scarcely less difficult to conceive of any impersonal motive for such prolonged and squalid deception which could seem adequate to a sane mind. The writers of apocryphal gospels and the fabricators of monkish charters and title-

[1] See Mr. Myers' account generally of the communications in Mr. Moses' note-books, and especially some messages purporting to have come from a recently deceased lady, which were never apparently made public in any form in the lifetime of the medium (*Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xi. p. 96).

CHAPTER VI

AUTOMATISM

AFTER this brief survey of the strongest evidence so far adduced for the physical phenomena of Spiritualism, the reader will no doubt be prepared to accept the conclusion provisionally formulated in the first chapter of the present book, that, with certain doubtful exceptions not sufficiently numerous or important to weigh heavily in the balance, they may be explained by trickery or muscular automatism on the one hand, and illusion or unconscious misrepresentation on the other. It would betray, however, a very inadequate conception of the nature of the movement to dismiss it as merely one more instance of the exploitation of fools by knaves. That many so-called mediums have been knaves of a commonplace type there can of course be little question; in particular, many of the American professionals who have fattened on the credulity of their victims appear to have taken to spirit-rapping as in other circumstances they would have taken to card-sharping or the confidence trick. But the typical mediums, the men or women who have risen to eminence in their profession, would not come under any such familiar formula. If knaves, they seem at any rate to have shared in the folly of their dupes. It is, no doubt, in this fact that the secret of their power lay. The medium succeeded in deceiving others because, wholly or partially, he at the same time deceived himself; and he deceived himself because, as a rule, he was not fully aware of what he was doing. The exact degree and nature of the medium's moral responsibility for any particular action it is, of course, impossible to define. As Huxley said of the cray-fish, to know how a medium feels and thinks one must become a medium. With mediums who exhibit exclusively in the trance, if the trance is not merely assumed as a blind —and as already said, it is rarely possible to prove the

genuineness of a trance state—the thaumaturgic performance may be wholly divorced from the waking consciousness. On the other hand, men like Slade and Foster were possibly as responsible for their actions—no more and no less—as any other charlatan who preys upon society. Again, it is not easy to define how far, and in what directions, mediumship involves deviation from the normal. Some mediums, no doubt, exhibit various symptoms of degeneracy; but to no greater extent than could probably be found amongst criminals or vagabonds. Others, such as some of the clairvoyants whose claims have lately been investigated by the Society for Psychical Research, and many private persons, show on a superficial acquaintance no other external sign of deviation from perfect sanity than is implied in the liability to fall into spontaneous trances. Yet some of these trance mediums, persons of good education, with no pecuniary motive, and indeed no very obvious motive of any kind, for fraud, have habitually exhibited physical manifestations of the ordinary kind. To suppose that they cheat for the mere fun of the thing might be a satisfactory solution if the performance took place only now and again. But when the cheating is repeated day after day and year after year, the fun must surely have evaporated.

If we revert to the history of the movement, we shall find that the predecessors of the latter-day mediums were distinctly of a pathologic type. There can be no question that the children who acted as witch-detectors were the victims of their own diseased imaginings, and would in these days have been treated for hysteria. The naughty little girls and boys who played, and still play, the Poltergeist in quiet households exhibit in many instances similar morbid tendencies;[1] and the "magnetic" somnambules, who in the early years of the last century served as the first intermediaries between a supposed spiritual world and our own, suffered from many ailments real and imaginary. The spirit mediums of the latter half of the nineteenth century were no doubt less obviously neurotic; and as the movement progressed there was a larger admixture of deliberate and apparently healthy knavery.[2] But the history of Spiritualism

[1] See my *Studies in Psychical Research*, pp. 159–60, and *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xii. p. 113, for some account of the signs of disease and abnormality observed in these children.

[2] Indications are not wanting, however, that even the most apparently healthy mediums belong to a degenerate type. Reference has already been made to the charges of criminality brought against Foster (above, p. 52). Similar charges have been brought against Slade (Truesdell, *Bottom Facts*,

in this country, as given in the earlier chapters of the last book, shows that here at any rate the professional trickster was an exotic. The movement began with table-turning, and was reinforced and kept alive by various private persons, many of them at any rate of unquestioned good faith, whose mediumship took the form of automatic writing, drawing, and speaking, and the seeing of visions. If private mediumship had ended at this point and the physical phenomena had been confined exclusively to persons notoriously practising for money, the problem would present less difficulty. But, as shown, physical mediumship in private circles soon went beyond mere table-turning and spirit-rapping, movements which were no doubt in many cases spontaneous and even unconscious.

Probably throughout the history of the movement, as at the present day, private mediums who exhibit physical phenomena of a kind which call for premeditation or deliberate effort have been a small minority as compared with the number of presumably innocent persons whose activities stop short at table-turning or trance-speaking. But actually the case is too frequent to be lightly dismissed as accidental or unimportant. Again and again we find persons, removed by education and social position from the ordinary temptations to fraud, who are engaged in the production of physical manifestations involving elaborate and systematic deception. In default of any adequate motive for their conduct, the explanation inevitably suggests itself that automatic movements of the simpler kind, unquestionably involuntary with many persons in their earlier stages, may tend to pass over into actions of a more complicated nature, and may at the same time lose something of their subconscious character.

Unfortunately the investigation of the problems of private mediumship is hampered by two considerations. In the first place many of the mediums concerned are still living, and a certain reserve is necessarily imposed upon one who, like the present writer, has been largely dependent for his knowledge of the subject upon the goodwill of the persons investigated. In proof of the statement that there have been actual exposures of systematic and apparently disinterested

pp. 299–301) and against one or two mediums in this country. Gibier (*Psychism*, pp. 164, 188. New York, 1900) cites several instances of physical abnormality and sexual aberration amongst mediums. Eusapia Paladino is said to be liable to attacks of hystero-epilepsy, etc. (Jules Bois, in *Le Matin*, 5th Jan., 1902); and the notorious prevalence of the drink habit amongst mediums points in the same direction.

deception by private persons, the details of which it is not considered advisable to publish, I am permitted to cite in support of my own personal experience the testimony of my colleagues, Professor Barrett, Dr. R. Hodgson, Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, and Miss Alice Johnson. Reference should also be made to an account, by the late Professor Sidgwick, of a case of "Disinterested Deception."[1]

The case of Mr. Stainton Moses was selected, therefore, as typical of private mediumship in general, not merely because the material was more abundant and the variety of the phenomena greater, but because his doings were open to discussion as being already matter of history. But the selection thus enforced had one obvious disadvantage which will serve to illustrate the other main obstacle to investigations of this kind. Mr. Stainton Moses had never been detected in trickery. Exposure, indeed, of the methods employed by private mediums is, for reasons which need not be repeated, difficult to ensure and seldom complete.[2]

Probably the stage performances of accomplished tricksters like the Davenport Brothers, Slade, and Foster have diverted attention from the real nature of the problem. Even such representatives of the modern psychology as Münsterberg[3] and Jastrow[4] treat of the subject as if the main things to be explained were how and why the witnesses were deceived. But Janet,[5] Richet, and other French writers have recognised that the prior question is, How came the medium to deceive? No doubt the essentially pathological nature of the problem was sooner recognised in France because of the obvious affinity of certain stages of mediumship with the more startling deviations from the normal to be found in such institutions as the Salpêtrière. Amongst English writers Maudsley has seen clearly that in Spiritualism there are impostors who deceive themselves, finding in that self-deception their most potent defence; and that in this kind of imposture there are manifold gradations, from trickery which is almost wholly innocent and unconscious

[1] *Journal S. P. R.*, July, 1894.

[2] In most "private" circles, whilst thorough investigation is precluded, the precautions adopted against possible trickery are ludicrously insufficient, and sometimes of set purpose altogether omitted: The belief in the genuineness of the resulting phenomena in such cases depends upon the confidence felt by the circle in the good faith of the medium—a consideration which is clearly irrelevant if it can be shown that the medium is not wholly responsible for his actions.

[3] *Psychology and Life*, chapter on "Psychology and Mysticism." New York, 1899.

[4] *Fact and Fable in Psychology*. Macmillan, 1901.

[5] *L'Automatisme Psychologique*, 2nd edition, 1894, pp. 376–419.

to premeditated chicanery hardly to be distinguished from any other form of vulgar fraud.[1]

Modern physiology has taught us to look upon the cerebro-spinal nervous system as an aggregation of nerve centres, each tending to react in its own way in response to an appropriate stimulus from without. The organism is perpetually being assailed by stimuli, incentives to action, of one kind or another, and a chaos of unrelated and automatic movements would ensue, but for one circumstance. The aggregation of nerve centres is not simply an aggregate, but a hierarchy, in which the activities of the lowest centres, the centres in which the response to external stimuli is the most immediate, are continually checked and controlled by the higher, the whole being in the normal man under the supreme direction of those highest centres which correspond to the consciousness and volition of waking life. In the amœba the sensation leads to an immediate motor reaction. In man the immediate reflex action of a sensory stimulus is commonly checked, and the nerve current, instead of discharging itself in a movement, is diverted to higher nerve centres. Thus its energy may be expended in irradiating by various channels through the network of nerve cells, a process which results, on the psychic side, in calling up images associated with the original sensation. Hence it comes about that the psychic life of civilised man stands out against a dim background of suppressed actions and inchoate ideas. Few of us in waking life are aware of the innumerable faint images which accompany the main stream of thought, still fewer probably of the remote origin of the process of thought itself in suppressed speech, or of the motor activities which still tend to accompany that process. For the normal man those twilight regions, where hover the ghosts of actions and ideas strangled at their birth, lie so far beyond the light of knowledge that hardly even in deliberate introspection can he catch faint glimpses of them. In dreams or delirium the riotous stream of mechanically associated images shows us what our thinking would be if there were no reflective faculties to select the serviceable and suppress the irrelevant elements; whilst the man who in deep reverie "thinks aloud," or follows the beat of music with swaying head and body, or, like Sam Weller,

[1] *The Pathology of Mind*, 3rd edition, pp. 64, 65, 78, etc. Again, the American writer Hammond divides mediums, somewhat too sharply perhaps, into two classes—the dishonest and the neurotic (*Spiritualism and Nervous Derangement*. London, 1876).

painfully indites his correspondence with tongue as well as hand, reminds us of the transmuted muscular activities out of which some factors of our thinking are, in the last analysis, fashioned.

Now sleep and reverie are the most familiar examples of certain states, as yet very imperfectly understood, in which the equilibrium of the psychic life is upset. Allied states are intoxications of various kinds, the delirium of fever, hypnosis, somnambulism, and other spontaneous trances, double consciousness, hysteria, epilepsy, and all those strange forms of neurotic affections — hysterical anæsthesia, hysterical paralysis, amnesia, aboulia, and the rest—which have been investigated during the last two or three decades by various groups of French and American observers. Whether, with Professor Pierre Janet, we regard each of these states, beginning with ordinary sleep, as constituting in itself a falling off from perfect health and sanity,[1] or whether, with many English and Continental medical men, we argue that even hypnosis is compatible with the fullest mental vigour, is not, for our present purpose, of material importance. The common characteristic of all these states with which we are here concerned is a division or "dissociation" of consciousness. For whereas in the ordinary waking life all the activities of the organism are consciously and deliberately subordinated to a common end, in these conditions of psychic disequilibrium a part, or it may be the whole, of our activities proceed without the control, and sometimes without the knowledge, of the central personality.

The main procession of ideas, then, is accompanied by innumerable fainter images, which flit momentarily through the penumbra of consciousness. In other words, out of the innumerable train of images started by automatic association the attention selects a few only on which to focus the consciousness, and lets the rest pass away to be, as a rule, forgotten. In dreams, however, where the ruling faculties are asleep, rejected material of this kind comes to the front. There for the ordinary man the matter ends. But with some persons a state of ecstasy or reverie occurs spontaneously or can be induced by appropriate means, in which dream images of this kind appear. Probably crystal-gazing or "scrying" is the most effective, as it is one of the oldest methods for inducing this state. By gazing into a crystal

[1] See *L'Automatisme Psychologique*, p. 137. "Un individu parfaitement sain . . . mais aucun homme n'est aussi parfait: mille circonstances, l'état de passion, *l'état de sommeil*, l'ivresse ou la maladie diminuent ou detruisent," etc.

some persons can become, as it were, spectators of their own dreams.[1] Of recent years, under the auspices of the late Mr. F. W. H. Myers in this country, a number of persons have made trial of their power of crystal-gazing and have recorded the results. Mr. Andrew Lang, Professor Pierre Janet, Dr. Morton Prince, Professor Hyslop, and others have also contributed observations made by themselves on other persons. In many cases there can be little doubt that the faculty of seeing pictures in a crystal implies no greater, or hardly greater, deviation from normality than the faculty of seeing similar pictures in dreams. The following is an abridged account, written in 1892, of her own experiences by a competent observer, Mrs. A. W. Verrall, a lecturer at Newnham College.[2]

Mrs. Verrall states that she is a good visualiser, and embodies most of her ideas in pictorial form. The mention of a name instantly calls up a mental picture. She sees faces in the fire and shapes in the clouds, and has had several spontaneous visual impressions (quasi-hallucinations). Cut crystal, polished glass, or a glass of water are equally efficacious in inducing pictures, but a dim light is found to be preferable. Mrs. Verrall believes that the crystal picture is built up from the bright points of light reflected in the crystal; but the picture once formed has a reality and a spontaneity quite unlike an imaginary scene called up voluntarily with closed eyes. The pictures are mostly coloured, but occasionally resemble black and white sketches. They represent animals, human beings, common objects (clock, ring, melon), or landscapes, and other scenes real and imaginary. In but a small proportion of cases has Mrs. Verrall been able to trace the origin of the pictures in any recent memories. But it is clear, from one or two incidents in her

[1] In some persons the structure of thought is apparently not primarily compounded of visual images, but of images derived from other sensations, usually auditory or motor. And experience shows that there are very wide differences between individuals in the power of forming visual images. The classic illustration is Mr. Galton's account of the result of his statistical inquiry on mental imagery (*Inquiries into Human Faculty*, 1883, p. 83 *et seq.*). Mr. Myers (*Sensory Automatism*, *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. viii. pp. 436–535) gives accounts, collected from various sources, of the systematised visual imagery which accompanies thought in certain persons. But in crystal vision, as in dreams and hallucinations generally, it seems to be the floating, half-developed, unsystematised images which make their presence felt. The fullest and most recent account of this unsystematised mental imagery underlying our psychical life which I have seen is contained in a monograph supplement to the *Psychological Review* (New York, May, 1898), "On Mental Imagery," by Wilfrid Lay. Mr. Lay begins by distinguishing this half-conscious mental imagery from (1) what is commonly known as "imagination"; (2) sensation; (3) visual after-images; (4) mere memory images. Visual images appear greatly to preponderate as a rule. In his own case they form about 57 per cent. of the total, auditory images numbering about 29 and olfactory about 6 per cent.

[2] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. viii. pp. 473–8.

experience, that the pictures in the crystal may represent things seen some time since and forgotten. Thus, on August 25th, 1890, Mrs. Verrall saw in the crystal an 'ugly clock in white alabaster, round face on hideous stand, dial black, letters gold.' She made a rough sketch of the clock, but could not identify it. A fortnight later, going to the house occupied by a sister of one of her servants (in which she had been on one occasion about a year before), she saw on the mantelpiece an alabaster clock very closely resembling the clock of her vision. That the real had served as the prototype of the visionary clock is rendered more probable from the fact that Mrs. Verrall had special reason at the time for thinking of the house in connection with her former servant.

Mrs. Verrall's crystal visions are mostly quite trivial and purposeless; but she records that she often receives from the crystal intimations, not, however, pictorial, reminding her of things which she had forgotten.

Mrs. Verrall's experience appears to be fairly typical. The special points to be noticed are that the visions are quite unmistakably real at the time of their appearance; so real and persistent, indeed, that some seers find it possible to employ a magnifying glass to bring out the details; that they are spontaneous, and often can neither be summoned nor dismissed at will; and that they are mostly as trivial and purposeless as dreams. No doubt, as a rule, the crystal pictures are simply reproductions or reconstructions of recent experiences; but with most seers it is only a small proportion that can be directly traced to their source. There are a good many instances on record, however, in which the picture, as in the case of Mrs. Verrall's alabaster clock, has been proved to be a more or less imaginatively altered reproduction of a scene long passed from the conscious memory; or of an object or mental image, perhaps of recent occurrence, which never reached the focus of consciousness at all. An experimental parallel to these cases can be observed in hypnotic subjects. The subject when awakened can often be made to see in the crystal some scene suggested to him, without retaining any recollection of whence the suggestion comes;[1] or will even, as in some of Professor

[1] Thus in a recent experiment I had repeated to a hypnotised subject, for the purpose of testing his memory, a Latin version of a bit of English doggerel:—

"Sanguinolentus erat, si vera est fabula, passer
Cui fuit in plumbo sanguinolenta domus," etc., etc.

It then occurred to me to bid him see in a looking-glass, on waking, the scene described by the lines. On waking, after writing some of the lines in *spiegel-schrift* (*i.e.* writing reversed so as to be read in a mirror), he took up the glass which had been used by me for interpreting the *spiegel-schrift*, and said that he

Janet's amnesic patients, furnish by this means to his physician useful information on the events, long since wiped out from the waking consciousness, which caused the malady.[1] As in the present chapter it is proposed to deal solely with the psychological mechanism of crystal-seeing, I omit for the present all reference to the alleged telepathic or clairvoyant significance of many of these visions.

In one respect Mrs. Verrall's experiences are exceptional, or her observation more critical than that of her fellow-seers. She believes, it will be seen, that the bright points of light seen in the crystal probably act as *points de repère* for her visions. Most crystal-seers do not recognise such an origin. But that the bright polished surface of the glass or crystal does act in some way as a stimulus to the retina, and thus infuses a sensory quality into the vague images flitting through the twilight of consciousness, there can be little question. The fact that the substances commonly used for scrying—crystal, glass, water, dark polished wood, oiled finger-nails, etc.—have common physical characteristics is sufficient to indicate some physical effect.[2] In a case recorded by Professor Hyslop the seeress, before a crystal was put into her hands, had been in the habit of seeing visions on the surface of sunlit water.[3] Mrs. Verrall, it will be seen, is not apparently aware of any alteration in her state of consciousness during her crystal visions. And, indeed, in the normal person it would appear that the disturbance in such cases is extremely slight. But some seers of visions recognise a subtle change in consciousness during the vision. Thus

saw in it a small bird of some kind—a sparrow—and some straw in its mouth; it was building its nest in a gutter or spout. The vision soon faded; and he seemed to have no idea that it had been suggested to him by the lines quoted.

[1] See *Nevroses et Idées fixes;* also M. Janet's remarks at the London International Congress of Experimental Psychology, quoted by Mr. Myers, *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. viii. pp. 482, 483. Miss Goodrich-Freer (*Essays in Psychical Research*. London, 1899) gives some interesting illustrations of forgotten incidents brought to light by the crystal.

[2] A shining surface is not absolutely essential, however; blank sheets of paper and other similar objects have served the purpose.

[3] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xii. p. 259. W. R. Newbold (*Psychological Review*, July, 1895), from the observation of various cases of crystal-seeing, draws the conclusion that the visionary scene represents the reflex response of the retina and lower optical centres to the prolonged, vague, indeterminate stimulus afforded by the lustrous surface of the glass. The smoky or milky clouds seen by most crystal-gazers represent, according to him, the first (mainly retinal) reflex; and this first amorphous sensation gradually becomes modified by the ideational centres. He quotes the case of a crystal-seer, a young girl, who describes in the first instance a grey spot, and proceeds: "Then the grey spot seems to sink to the bottom of the glass, and turns and whirls about slowly; then, of course, *it has to become something.*"

Mr. Keulemans, a well-known scientific draughtsman, records that:—

"The eye of a bird, during the slow process of drawing it, forms a capital point of concentration for the mind and consequent distraction from ordinary flows of thought. I noticed that whenever strong impressions had got hold of my mind they had a tendency to develop themselves into a vivid mind-picture as soon as my eye and attention were concentrated upon the eye in the drawing; and that whenever I began darkening the iris, leaving the light speck the most prominent part, I would slowly pass off into a kind of dream-state."[1]

On the other hand, Miss Goodrich-Freer ("Miss X.") believes that her crystal visions occur without diminution of her conscious activity. But in the case of her spontaneous visions, at any rate, there would seem to be some disturbance of the psychic equilibrium. Here is an account by a friend who was present during one of Miss Freer's visions:—

"'X.' [Miss Freer's pseudonym] and I were dressing to go [out] when I suddenly noticed that her eyes were *fixed on the window in a manner I knew well, and have long learnt to associate with something 'uncanny.'* I waited until her face regained its normal expression, and then asked what she had seen or what she felt. She turned to the clock and said in a *dreamy, far-away tone*, 'A quarter-past eleven—I think Mr. C. is dead, or very ill.'"[2]

In this case, however, the vision occurred spontaneously; and in Mr. Keulemans' case the reverie was apparently hastened by a previously existing idea struggling for expression. It is likely that under such circumstances the disturbance of consciousness would be more profound than in the deliberately induced crystal vision, where the attention is directed beforehand to observing and recording the results of the experiment.[3]

[1] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. viii. p. 517.

[2] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xi. p. 132; see also Parish (to whom I owe this reference), *Hallucinations and Illusions*, p. 297 and elsewhere, on the indications of dissociation of consciousness accompanying similar visions. Another crystal-seer, "Miss A.," writes that if she looks long in the crystal her eyes water, and she has "a feeling as if a band were tied round my head" (*Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. viii. p. 500).

[3] For other accounts of crystal vision see the records by various persons quoted in Mr. Myers' article on "Sensory Automatism and Induced Hallucination" already referred to (*Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. viii. pp. 436–535); Miss Freer's own account of her experience, in *Essays in Psychical Research* (Redway, 1899); an article by Professor Hyslop, *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xii. p. 259, etc.; "The Experimental Study of Visions," by Dr. Morton Prince, *Brain*, 1898, p. 529; *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xiv. p. 366; *The Making of Religion*, by Andrew Lang, Longmans and Co., 1898, chap. v., on "Crystal Vision, Savage and Civilised";

Of other conditions, apart from disease, which favour the production of sensory hallucination, probably the most efficacious are those incidental to a Spiritualist séance. The prolonged darkness in itself appears to act as a stimulus to the retina; entoptic phenomena which escape notice in broad daylight become conspicuous in the almost complete absence of external stimuli, just as organic sensations from the viscera come to the surface in dreams; or, again, streaks of light through crevices, or faint reflections from polished surfaces become the starting-point for elaborate sensory figments. That the emotional conditions are peculiarly favourable for sense-deception has been already pointed out. It is well known that vague cloudy lights are often seen at dark séances, and that, as in the crystal similar photisms generally usher in definite pictures, so at the dark séance these cloudy lights may precede or develop into the appearance of definite human forms. Recently various critical observers have recorded results of this kind either in their own experience or from observations of others.[1]

By whatever means induced, this power of seeing visions seems to develop rapidly with exercise, to such an extent that the subject is liable to be constantly hallucinated. I have known several Spiritualists of unquestioned integrity, who would frequently see visions and phantasmal figures, often in broad daylight. Most successful crystal-seers have experiences of such spontaneous visions.

In dealing with clairaudience, the hearing of voices, music, and the like, we do not find any such wealth of material to assist our analysis; nor, indeed, does the subject lend itself so readily to systematic investigation. But there is no reason to doubt that the phenomena have, physiologically, the same origin as the visions which we have just been considering; that the voices heard are, in fact, simply the result of the exaggerated activity of lower cerebral strata, released for the time from the repressive control habitually exercised by the higher centres.[2]

Psychological Review, New York, July, 1895, "The Experimental Induction of Automatic Processes," by W. Romaine Newbold; the writings of Pierre Janet; an article on "Magic Mirrors," etc., by Andrew Lang, in the *Monthly Magazine* for December, 1901, etc.

[1] See especially "A Study in Spiritistic Hallucinations," by Professor Harlow Gale, *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xv. pp. 65–90; "Some Psychical Phenomena bearing upon the Question of Spirit Control," by Principal C. H. Tout, *ibid.*, vol. xi. p. 309; "A Case of Psychic Automatism," communicated by Professor W. James, *ibid.*, vol. xii. p. 281.

[2] Mr. Myers (*Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. viii. p. 492) quotes an account by "Miss X." (Miss Freer) of auditory hallucinations (human voices and musical sounds) induced by

If we turn to the manifestations of motor automatism—inspirational writing, drawing, speaking, movements of tables, rapping, etc.—we shall find a like explanation indicated. That our ordinary visible and conscious activities are habitually attended by innumerable suppressed motor reflexes is less easy to demonstrate than in the parallel case of faint sensory images. Not only is the unconsciousness more profound in the one case than in the other, but, for obvious reasons, no organism could long survive in which a riot of unrestrained motor activities at all comparable to the lawless crowd of dream images was liable to occur, even occasionally. To find a parallel, on the motor side, to the phenomena furnished by dreaming on the sensory side, we have to look to our hospitals and asylums. Sudden outbreaks of mania, and especially the mania which follows a violent epileptic attack, are plausibly explained as due to the healthy functioning of the still unimpaired intermediate regions of the cerebro-spinal system suddenly released from the inhibitory influence of the cortical centres, which are completely exhausted by the prior paroxysms.[1]

But even in normal life we can discover traces of these imperfectly strangled activities. All thinking in the civilised man is "more or less successfully suppressed action, and, as a well-known muscle-reader expresses it, all willing is either pushing or pulling."[2] "Thinking aloud" may be regarded as merely an atavistic reversion to the primitive form of thought; and the effort to concentrate thought, to think strongly on a concrete matter, *e.g.* a name or an object, tends constantly to produce some form of muscular activity, either subconscious whispering of the name thought of, or subconscious movement in the direction of the object. It is on this tendency that the marvellous success of professional

holding a shell to the ear. W. R. Newbold (*Psychological Review*, New York, July, 1895) mentions a young woman in whom auditory hallucinations would be excited on hearing the sound of water running from a spigot; also a paranoiac, who complained of hearing a continuous hissing, which sometimes developed into abusive language; the cause was ultimately traced to a chronic inflammation of the inner ear (see also Parish, *Hallucinations and Illusions*, pp. 70, 71). Auditory hallucinations are, it is well known, comparatively rare amongst sane persons. The hearing of voices—*i.e.* clearly externalised voices, as distinguished from the "inner voice"—is not, therefore, so common a form of mediumship as the seeing of visions or phantasmal figures. But I have come across several instances amongst Spiritualists.

[1] See *Croonian Lectures on the Evolution and Dissolution of the Nervous System*, by Dr. Hughlings-Jackson, 1884. In the same way the rats seen in delirium may be regarded as the outcome of the still healthy intermediate sensory centres which have not been affected by the disease.

[2] Jastrow, *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, p. 336.

"thought-reading," more aptly called "muscle-reading," depends.

Of late years some critical study has been given to these involuntary movements. Professor Jastrow has devised an instrument, a modification of that employed in the case of table-turning by Faraday, for recording movements of the hand and body when the mind is under the influence of various preoccupations. He has set his subject to name a list of colours, think of a given locality, or count the oscillations of a pendulum; and he has found that the record of the slight automatic movements of head and hand tends to show some rough correspondence with the subject's mental occupation; there is movement in the direction of the place thought of, or back and forward movements in sympathy with those of the pendulum.[1]

Again Professor W. R. Newbold[2] and Mr. Solomons and Miss Stein[3] have made experiments in eliciting automatic writing and speaking from normal subjects. The results obtained were not perhaps very striking; the specimens of automatic writing furnished by the latter observers, in particular, are very far inferior, in fluency and in intellectual content, to some of the "inspirational" writings which we have considered in previous chapters. But the experiments, nevertheless, go to show that, even in perfectly normal individuals, there is a general tendency to movement without conscious motor impulse, for sensory ideas to pass on subconsciously into motor reactions, and for the organism to react automatically to stimuli such as that afforded by a pencil placed in the hand; that such normal persons may train themselves to write or read aloud, whilst the main current of their attention is otherwise occupied, in such wise that they may be, for some moments at a time, ignorant of the things written or spoken; and that, in particular, they may be entirely unconscious of any volition of their own in connection with the movements of the hand in writing. The movement in such cases seems to the owner of the hand

[1] *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, by Joseph Jastrow (Boston, U.S.A., 1900). A record of these experiments first appeared in the *American Journal of Psychology*, vol. iv. (1892) p. 398, under the title of "A Study of Involuntary Movements." A record of further and more elaborate experiments on similar lines, and tending to similar conclusions, will be found in an article by Milo A. Tucker, in vol. viii. p. 394 of the same review.

[2] *Psychological Review*, New York, July, 1895.

[3] *Ibid.*, Sept., 1896. An article by Miss Stein (*ibid.*, May, 1898), on "Cultivated Motor Automatism," contains an account of some later experiments. But none of her subjects seem to have shown spontaneity in the automatic writing.

About 1892 Mr. Tout took part with some neighbours in a series of spiritualistic séances. Subjective lights were occasionally seen by himself and one other member of the circle. The ladies present were affected with spasmodic twitchings and other movements, sometimes of a violent character, chiefly in the fingers and arms. Mr. Tout felt a strong impulse to imitate these motions, and occasionally gave way to the impulse, though never to such an extent as to lose complete control of his limbs. At later séances he on several occasions yielded to similar impulses to assume a foreign personality. In this way he acted the part of a deceased woman, the mother of a friend then present. He put his arm round his friend and caressed him, as his mother might have done, and the personation was recognised by the spectators as a genuine case of "spirit control." On another occasion Mr. Tout, having under the influence of music given various impersonations, was finally oppressed by a feeling of coldness and loneliness, as of a recently disembodied spirit. His wretchedness and misery were terrible, and he was only kept from falling to the floor by some of the other sitters. At this point one of the sitters "made the remark, which I remember to have overheard, 'It is father controlling him,' and I then seemed to realise who I was and whom I was seeking. I began to be distressed in my lungs, and should have fallen if they had not held me by the hands and let me back gently upon the floor. As my head sank back upon the carpet I experienced dreadful distress in my lungs and could not breathe. I made signs to them to put something under my head. They immediately put the sofa cushions under me, but this was not sufficient—I was not raised high enough yet to breathe easily—and they then added a pillow. I have the most distinct recollection of a sigh of relief I now gave as I sank back like a sick, weak person upon the cool pillow. I was in a measure still conscious of my actions, though not of my surroundings, and I have a clear memory of seeing myself in the character of my dying father lying in the bed and in the room in which he died. It was a most curious sensation. I saw his shrunken hands and face, and lived again through his dying moments; only now I was both myself—in some indistinct sort of way—and my father, with his feelings and appearance."[1]

Throughout his impersonation Mr. Tout never seems to have completely lost consciousness of his doings; and though his words and actions appeared to him at the time outside his own initiative, he is satisfied that they are really to be explained merely as the dramatic working-out, by some half-conscious stratum of his own personality, of suggestions made at the time by other members of the circle,

[1] *Proc. S.P.R.*, vol. xi. pp. 309-16.

or received in prior experiences of the kind. He describes himself as peculiarly susceptible to suggestion, and as having been much addicted, in his earlier years, to day-dreams and the weaving of romances.

In another autobiographical record of mediumship, communicated to the *Proceedings of the S. P. R.* by Professor William James,[1] who is personally acquainted with the author, the automatism takes a more extreme development:—

Mr. Le Baron (pseudonym) is a journalist, and has published some work on metaphysics. In 1894 he stayed for some time at an American Spiritualist camp-meeting, and joined a circle which held séances at midnight in the pine woods for converse with the invisible brethren. At one of these meetings Mr. Le Baron became conscious of new and strange sensations. He felt his head drawn back until he was forced flat on the ground. Then "the force produced a motor disturbance of my head and jaws. My mouth made automatic movements, till in a few seconds I was distinctly conscious of *another's voice*—unearthly, awful, loud, weird—bursting through the woodland from my own lips, with the despairing words, 'Oh, my people!'" Mutterings of semi-purposive prophecy followed.

A few days later he spoke again in the same involuntary manner to the friend with whom he was staying, in the character of her recently deceased mother. Again, after sleeping in the bed for some years occupied by his friend's father, who had been lame, he awoke lame, and limped painfully for some hours. He soon began both to write and to speak sentences of semi-prophetic and mystical character, such as "He shall be a leader of the host of the Lord"; "I shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt answer to My voice." He learnt to converse by means of a pencil and paper with this invisible monitor, which, or whom, he not very happily christens "the psychophysical spontaneity." Various journeys were enjoined upon him—to Stowe, in Vermont, to St. Louis, to Seville, to the Emperor of China; the first two journeys were actually undertaken. Later he learnt that he was the reincarnation of Rameses, and received many messages concerning his high mission. Finally, it was given to him to speak in an unknown tongue, and to furnish to himself translations of the same. Some of these fragments were written down at the time by himself; others were spoken into a phonograph in the presence of Professor James and Dr. Hodgson. Here is a specimen, together with its translation:—

"*The Unknown Tongue.*—Te rumete tau. Ilee lete leele luto scele. Impe re scele lee luto. Onko keere scete tere lute. Ombo te scele to bere te kure. Sinte lute sinte Kuru. Orumo imbo impe rute scelete. Singe, singe, singe, eru. Imba, Imba, Imba.

[1] Vol. xii., pp. 277–98.

"*Translation.*—The old word! I love the old word of the heavens! The love of the heavens is emperor! The love of the darkness is slavery! The heavens are wise, the heavens are true, the heavens are sure. The love of the earth is past! The King now rules in the heavens!"

That these utterances were involuntary, and that their content was not consciously suggested by anything in Mr. Le Baron's experience or aspirations, is proved not only by his own reiterated statement to that effect, but by the fact that he was persistent for some time in the hope that the unknown tongue would prove to be a real language, with analogies to some form of primitive human speech; and that he spent much time and labour in endeavouring to find its origin in Coptic or Romany or some Dravidian tongue. It is obvious, however, from a very superficial examination that the "unknown tongue" is not a language at all, and that its elements are fragments of English speech. As a work of art, indeed, it is far inferior to the "Martian language" employed by M. Flournoy's medium, Hélène. Again, the "deific verbiage" and psycho-automatic rhetoric which form the bulk of Mr. Le Baron's involuntary utterances are scarcely more involved and pretentious, and distinctly more melodious, than his own normal style as exhibited in the record before us.

The two cases last quoted aptly illustrate two stages of automatic action. Mr. Tout yields himself to the impulse to personation, and is yet half conscious that he is acting a part. He is apparently in the same psychological condition as subjects in a light stage of hypnosis, who will faithfully fulfil the hallucination imposed upon them by the hypnotist, but will be partly aware all the time that they are making themselves ridiculous, and that the comedy or tragedy which they are set to enact is but an affair of pasteboard and tinsel after all. There seems to be here a real division of consciousness, the one part acting as spectator and critic of the performance directed by the other.[1] Traces of the same conflict of separate systems of ideas occur in dreams, and it is said to form a marked feature in the delirium caused by haschisch.[2]

In Mr. Le Baron's case we reach a further stage. Not only are the movements more completely beyond the subject's control, but he is no longer conscious that they originate

[1] See Professor James' remarks upon this point (*Principles of Psychology*, vol. ii. pp. 605, 606).

[2] See Parish, *Hallucinations and Illusions*, p. 45, and the references there cited.

CHAPTER VII

DREAM-CONSCIOUSNESS

IT may be inferred, then, that in normal persons automatism will not easily or permanently develop outside certain narrow limits. When these limits are rapidly overstepped; when, as in numerous cases cited in preceding chapters, the automatic writer begins with little practice to write sermons and poems, or draw pictures whose prototypes are found neither in heaven above nor in the earth beneath; when the visions in the crystal grow into substantial spectres, obtruding themselves in the daylight—we are entitled to assume some psychic instability, some tendency of the central nervous system to split up, or become "dissociated" temporarily or permanently. The Continental writers, on whom we are mainly dependent for reports of first-hand systematic observations, have drawn their conclusions almost exclusively from the study of cases obviously pathologic. In these the psychical symptoms, the division of memory and of consciousness, the mutually independent and even antagonistic centres of volition in the same organism, are accompanied by physical symptoms of a pronounced character. The right arm, which controls the convulsions of delirium and prevents the left hand from inflicting bodily injury on the patient, is itself insensible to pricking, pinching, or thumping; the hystero-paralytic, whose memory is split up into six differing and mutually exclusive fragments, displays six corresponding states of partial paralysis and anæsthesia. When Leonie the Second, or Miss Beauchamp the Third, befools one of her co-partners, we find that the physical organism, which is the common property of the partnership, is feeble and neurasthenic, if not actually defective in some sensory equipment or muscular activity. But in less extreme cases it is more difficult to detect any physical symptoms corresponding with the psychical dissociation. Janet, however, and other observers agree in

attributing the ignorance which the apparently normal automatist commonly shows of the movements made by his hand to partial anæsthesia.[1] Binet has shown that this partial anæsthesia of the moving member can actually be detected by mechanical means: the skin of the writing hand is less readily distinguish than in the normal state the two points of a pair of compasses.[2] And W. James has found that the writing hand is sometimes quite insensible to pain.[3]

Again, in many automatists who betray no more marked sign of abnormality than the liability to fall into spontaneous trances, there may be found also local anæsthetic patches on the skin, sometimes temporary and shifting, sometimes apparently lasting unchanged for considerable periods. In the trance and occasionally at other times there will be convulsive movements, contractions, and other disturbances of the muscular system.[4]

On the psychical side the indications of disunion in the cerebral hierarchy are easier to detect. Binet, indeed, sees in the simplest case of automatic movement—as when the hand keeps on repeating pothooks and circles—the rudiments of a secondary personality.[5] But if we accept the view of the American observers cited in the last chapter, that these simpler movements are to be explained rather as [illegible] of normal reflex action than as indicating the existence of any separate system of ideas, or parasitic consciousness, it is difficult to deny the participation of the [illegible] cerebral centres in the movement when, for instance, the writing shows intelligence not apparently inferior to that of the subject in his ordinary state. The real difficulty is to explain how this intelligence, this orderly sequence of ideas,

[illegible] *Automatism*, Pp. 4[illegible]ne, pp. 372, 373. Solomons and Stein [illegible] *Psychological Review*, Sept., 1896) claim to distinguish three sensory elements in [illegible] writing a word: (1) the sense of effort; (2) the [illegible] the knowledge of the completed act [illegible] (3) sensations, mostly tactile and muscular, from the arm, [illegible] the writing-surface. It is with the disappearance of the first two, according to them, that the feeling of personal responsibility for the act ceases. When the subject is no longer conscious of having willed or put forth effort, he does not recognise the act as his own. But other writers have not confirmed this analysis.

[2] *Alterations of Personality* (American translation), p. 242. London, 1895.

[3] *Proc. Amer. in S. P. R.*, p. 549. I have recently repeated this experiment with complete success on an English subject—a well-educated man of about thirty. In the case of my subject, however, both hands were almost completely numb and insensible to the pain of pricks and pinches, but not to the touch, and they continued so not only during the (post hypnotic) act of writing, but for some minutes afterwards.

[4] See the discussion below, on the case of M. Flournoy's medium, Helene Smith.

[5] *Op. cit.*, p. 220, etc.

springs up ready-made, without any conscious preparation on the part of the subject. It is this difficulty which has led so many persons to find the explanation of their own "automatic" rhetoric in celestial inspiration.

The explanation, no doubt, is that in such cases there has been subconscious preparation—the beginnings of a secondary consciousness. We find in a remark of Mr. Hill Tout's a clue to the mystery:—

"Building and peopling *chateaux en Espagne* was a favourite occupation of mine in my earlier days, and this long-practised faculty is doubtless a potent factor in all my characterisations, and probably also in those of many another full-fledged medium."[1]

It is probable that an over-indulgence in day-dreams forms the first indication of the tendency to isolated and unregulated psychic activity, which in its more extreme form may develop into a fixed idea or an obsession. The nature of the supposed process will be more clearly understood if we consider its workings in the first instance under circumstances specially favourable for its development, that is, in subjects of markedly neurotic temperament; and then return to the consideration of the effect of similar subconscious reveries in persons of more stable mental constitution. M. Janet has traced in several cases this gradual development of a subterranean day-dream until it invades and obscures the whole waking life. One of the most instructive of these histories is that entitled "A Case of Possession":—[2]

Achille is a French peasant of bad family history, his mother, in particular, and her family having been given to drunkenness. Achille himself in his youth was feeble, delicate, and timid, but not markedly abnormal. He married at twenty-two, and all went well until one day in his thirty-third year, after returning home from a short absence, he became afflicted with extreme taciturnity, and in the end completely dumb. He was examined by various physicians, who successively diagnosed his ailment, one as diabetes, another as angina pectoris. Achille's voice now returned, he manifested symptoms appropriate in turn to either malady, and incessantly bewailed his sufferings. In the final stage, he fell into a complete lethargy, and remained motionless for two days. At the end of that period he awoke and burst into a fit of Satanic laughter, which presently changed into frightful shrieks and complaints that he was tortured by demons. This state lasted for many

[1] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xi. p. 315.
[2] *Nevroses et Idées fixes*, vol. i. p. 377 *et seq.*

weeks. He would pour forth blasphemies and obscenities; and immediately afterwards lament and shudder at the terrible words which the demon had uttered through his mouth. He drank laudanum and other poisons, but did not die; he even tied his feet together, and threw himself into the water, ultimately coming safe to land. In each case he ascribed his deliverance to the fact that his body was doomed to be for ever the abode of the damned. He would describe the evil spirits which tormented him, their diabolic grimaces and the horns which adorned their heads.

Ultimately he came under Professor Janet's charge, and the latter satisfied himself that the unhappy man had all the signs of genuine possession as described by mediæval chroniclers; that his blasphemies were involuntary, and many of his actions unconsciously performed. Janet even made the devil write at his bidding—in French not too correctly spelt—poor Achille the while knowing nothing of the matter; and further established the fact that during the convulsive movements of the upper part of his body Achille's arms were insensible to pricking and pinching—an old-time proof of demoniacal possession. In the end this most guileful of modern exorcists persuaded the devil, as a proof of his power over the unhappy man, to send poor Achille to sleep; and in that suggested sleep M. Janet interrogated the demoniac, and learnt the secret of his malady. He had been acting out for all these months the course of a most unhappy dream. During the short absence which preceded his attack he had been unfaithful to his wife. Possessed with a morbid terror of betraying his fault, he had become dumb. The physicians who had been called in had unwittingly suggested, by their questions, the symptoms of one or two fatal maladies, and his morbid dream-self had promptly seized upon the hints, and realised them with surprising fidelity. In the slow development of his uneasy dream the time came for the man to die; and after death there remained for such a sinner as he nothing but damnation. The lesser devils stuck nails into the flesh, and Satan himself, squeezing through the holes so made, entered on an ambiguous co-tenancy of the tortured body.

It is pleasant to record that the skilful exorcist was able to dispel the evil dream, and restore the sufferer to his right mind.

It will be seen that here we have a veritable schism of consciousness; the dream state intervening in the ordinary life produces the illusion of a double personality, which is interpreted, according to the tradition once prevalent throughout Europe, but now lingering only in a few remote districts and in a few enfeebled intellects, as possession by the devil. It is only in markedly pathological cases that the division of the personality is so complete, and the consequence of a disordered dream so grave. But even in

very simple cases of automatism we may trace the beginnings of the cleavage; and the illusion of an alien personality, as we have seen in innumerable instances, is of very rapid growth.

Another case of M. Janet's shows us, in an educated subject, a similar example of double personality of much slower growth, but of hardly less extreme type. In this case the automatism, beginning with manifestations of the ordinary mediumistic kind, developed, owing no doubt to some native nervous instability, into a complete obsession, under which the unhappy victim, much against his conscious will, committed all kinds of absurd and injurious actions.

M. Ler at the time of the observations was a man of forty, of good intelligence and education, actively engaged in teaching, and with no definite ailment in the past beyond a tendency to neurasthenia. When about thirty years old he became interested in Spiritualism, and soon developed as a writing and drawing medium. Later he took to 'inspirational' speaking. At a still later stage the automatic manifestations, which had at the outset been confined to the séance-room, or, at least, had been summoned and repressed at will, now passed beyond the control of the unhappy 'medium,' and took to appearing at all times and seasons. Finally, the controlling 'spirit' imposed ridiculous and even hurtful commands upon him. When the victim ventured to disobey these commands, a curious penalty was exacted by the offended spirit. The man's own hand, against his will, tore his clothes, broke his furniture, and threw his papers into disorder. At the stage when Professor Janet's assistance was invoked the patient had begun to tear up bank-notes, and had on one occasion thrown himself into the Seine. In the victim's own words, '*Il* m'empêche de manger. *Il* m'empêche de boire . . . . *Il* est toujours pres de moi, et *Il* chuchote des menaces. Il ne faut pas en rire, car *Il* les execute trop souvent. *Il* m'a déjà jeté à le Seine, et *Il* finira par me tuer.'[1]

M. Janet, taking such cases as these for a text, interprets all systematised automatism, and especially all mediumship, as examples of abnormally developed day-dreams.[2] It is

[1] *Nevroses et Idées fixes*, vol. ii. pp. 172–9.

[2] Janet's words are: "Je crois que nous sommes tous plus ou moins semblables à ces tout petits [children telling each other stories] et que nous aimons à nous raconter sans cesse de belles histoires qui nous font oublier la plate réalité et nous donnent le courage de travailler à la transformer. Mais cette belle histoire . . . nous nous la racontons bien souvent dans la journée même en marchant, en mangeant, en accomplissant un travail mécanique qui ne demande pas trop d'attention, des écritures, des dessins, de la couture surtout, nous nous parlons sans cesse et nous continuons ce récit interminable.

"Souvent même nous sommes ennuyés, quand les nécessités de la vie nous

probable that he somewhat exaggerates the prevalence, amongst ordinary adults, of indulgence in day-dreams of the kind supposed. Amongst adult Englishmen the practice can hardly be supposed a common one; and some statistics recently published in the American *Journal of Psychology* indicate that whilst most children and a large proportion of women are given to the practice, it is comparatively rare amongst men.[1]

But probably with persons of strong imagination, and especially with those of feeble health or character, or who retain many childish characteristics, the habit may persist into adult life, and form, as George Eliot puts it, a convenient mental opiate.

Nor, again, would it be reasonable to infer that because M. Ler began by practising mediumship, and ended by becoming a victim to a self-imposed obsession, that all who yield themselves to similar practices incur an appreciable risk of a like fate. It would be more in accordance with what we have learnt of mental pathology to surmise that catastrophe must in any event have overtaken M. Ler, and that Spiritualism in his case, as demoniac possession in that of Achille, merely furnished a suitable embodiment for his delirium. In any case the persons on whom Janet's observations were made appear to have been neurotics of much more advanced types than are commonly met with in this country. In the following case, one of the most instructive which I have come across in my own experience, the idea of spiritual intercourse and its incidental practices, so far from accelerating, appears actually to have averted a serious crisis by providing a harmless outlet for pent-up nervous energies.[2]

Miss A. B., a young woman of about thirty, experienced a sudden and demonstrative attachment for a man, C. D., living in the same neighbourhood. The affair attracted some unpleasant notoriety, and the young man, who had apparently acted a rather

forcent à faire attention à quelque chose de réel, et nous nous hâtons de revenir à cette histoire qui se déroule en nous sans effort, d'une manière si facile et si agréable."—*Nevroses et Idées fixes*, vol. i. p. 393.

[1] Vol. vii. (1895), p. 86, "The Continued Story," by Mabel W. Learoyd, The exact figures are:—

	Women.			Men.		
	Yes.		No.	Yes.		No.
Adults . . .	100	...	114	20	...	128
Children . . .	41	...	21	29	...	23

[2] Dr. Garth Wilkinson, as already stated (above, p. 36), advocated the practice of automatic writing as actually beneficial in certain cases of insanity (*The Homœopathic Principle applied to Insanity*, London, 1857).

passive part throughout, abruptly discontinued the acquaintance. Miss A. B. continued, however, to cherish the belief that the man had been influenced by the malice of her enemies, and that he was still profoundly attached to her. A few weeks after the breach she felt one evening a curious feeling in the throat, as of choking—the prelude probably, under ordinary circumstances, to an attack of hysteria. This feeling was succeeded by involuntary movements of the hands and a fit of long-continued and apparently causeless sobbing. Then, in presence of a member of her family, she became, in her own belief, possessed by the spirit of C. D., personating his words and gestures and speaking in his character. After this date she continually held conversation, as she believes, with C. D.'s spirit; "he" sometimes speaking aloud through her mouth, sometimes conversing with her in the inner voice. Occasionally "he" wrote messages through her hand, and I have the testimony of a member of her family that the writing so produced resembled that of C. D. Occasionally also A. B. had visions, in which she claimed to see C. D. and what he was doing at the moment. At other times she professed to hear him speaking or to understand by some inner sympathy his feelings and thoughts.

It seems clear that in this case we have to do simply with the dream of an hysterical girl—a device by which the wounded pride is salved and possibly a serious nervous crisis averted. But this dream, unlike other dreams, is not confined to the hours when the higher centres are off duty, nor manifested only in sensory images; it pervades the waking hours, and as in Achille's case, but with happier results, is acted out in detail. A curious feature of the case is that A. B.'s dream has imposed not merely on herself, but also apparently on at least two members of her family.[1]

M. Flournoy, Professor of Psychology in the University of Geneva, has done more than any other recent writer to elucidate the genesis of mediumship. His methods and results are similar to those of Janet and the French School, but he has had the advantage of studying at close quarters subjects of a less abnormal type than the patients at the Salpêtrière. One of his most instructive observations is on a case of mediumship belonging to the transitional type referred to at the end of the next chapter, which germinated in a few days, and flowered apparently only for some forty-eight hours:—

[1] I should perhaps state that I received the account of the episode from A. B. herself and from one other member of the family. I could discover no grounds for their belief that A. B.'s sensations were in any way connected with C. D.; for it is impossible to attach any weight to the imitation of a handwriting with which A. B. was perfectly familiar.

M. Michel Til was a man of forty-eight, well educated and in good health. One Friday he was persuaded by some Spiritualist friends to try his hand at automatic writing. He succeeded at his first attempt in obtaining some flourishes, and a few phrases written in a hand very different from his own. He continued the practice for the next two days; and on the Sunday, after an evening spent with the "spirits," he passed a very troubled night. An inner voice insisted on speaking to him, promising friendship and health, and prophesying a magnificent future for him: "*Tes destinées sont bénies, je serai ton guide et ton soutien.*" His finger took to tracing similar phrases on the wall in the darkness.

The following day M. Til was much disturbed. The automatic movements continued incessantly throughout the morning, and finally the writing conveyed the terrible news that his son had been detected helping himself from his employer's cigarette-box; that he had met reproof with insolence, and had been given notice of dismissal. The distracted parent went at once to the office where his son was employed. The head of the firm was out, but the chief clerk assured M. Til that his son's character was excellent, and that they had no fault to find with him. Whilst the conversation was proceeding, M. Til's finger traced on the table a phrase which proved to be: "Je suis navré de la duplicité de cet homme."

The unhappy parent could not be satisfied until the assurance of his son's good conduct had been repeated by the head of the firm on his return; and the guilty hand then wrote: "Je t'ai trompé, Michel; pardonne-moi."

M. Flournoy puts forward the following explanation of the episode. M. Til had some three weeks before remarked that his son smoked a good many cigarettes. The young man had explained that everybody at his office did so, and that the chief left his cigarettes about everywhere, so that any of the clerks could have helped themselves if they wanted to. The latent and unacknowledged uneasiness which was apparently originated by this remark was stimulated to renewed activity by a chance conversation, just before the lying message was received, with an old acquaintance, who asked, "Is your son leaving his place? I hear Z. [the employer] has a vacancy for a clerk." M. Til's psychic equilibrium had been already upset by the previous automatic messages, and the disturbed night which supervened completed the mischief; in the soil thus prepared the germ of the subconscious drama sprouted and grew like Jonah's gourd, happily to wither as quickly.[1]

[1] *Revue Philosophique*, Feb. 1899, "Genèse de quelques prétendus messages spirites."

Those who are familiar with the manifestations of modern Spiritualism will have known many cases of similar sporadic outbursts of automatism, in which the subject for a time appeared to lose control of his personality, and was only recalled by some such sudden shock as in M. Til's case. The planchette took to writing obscenities and blasphemies, the crystal revealed only purposeless horrors, or the inner voice sent the too trustful disciple on a fool's errand.

In his latest volume[1] M. Flournoy has given the results of five years' observation on a case of automatism which has been, according to his explanation of the matter, incubated for the greater part of a lifetime:—

Miss Hélène Smith—the name is fictitious—was born about 1863. Her parents are well educated and healthy, by no means of the neurotic or psychopathic type, though Mrs. Smith has had in the course of her life two or three hallucinatory visions. Hélène herself as a child was quiet and dreamy, and had occasional visions, but was, on the whole, not specially remarkable. She is, to all outward appearances at the present time, healthy, even to robustness. From the age of fifteen she has been employed in a large commercial establishment in Geneva, and holds a position of some responsibility. But it is in 1892 that her real history begins. In that year she was persuaded by some friends to join a Spiritualist circle. It soon appeared that she was herself a powerful medium. At first her mediumship consisted in seeing visions, hearing voices, and assisting in tilting the table, whilst still retaining more or less consciousness and subsequent memory of her experiences. Shortly after M. Flournoy's admission to the circle, in the winter of 1894–5, Miss Smith's mediumship advanced a stage, and she habitually passed at the séance into a trance state, retaining subsequently no memory of her visions and doings in that state. Her development followed at first the normal course. She delivered messages of a personal character to her sitters, purporting to emanate from deceased friends and the like. She offered numerous proofs of clairvoyance. She was from time to time controlled by spirits of the famous dead. Some of her earliest trances were under the guidance and inspiration of Victor Hugo. Within a few months, however, the spirit of the poet—too late, indeed, for his own post-mortem reputation, for he had already perpetrated some verses—was expelled with ignominy by a more masterful demon who called himself Leopold. The new-comer was at first somewhat reticent on his own past, and when urgently questioned was apt to take refuge in moral platitudes. Later, however, he revealed himself as Giuseppe Balsamo, Count Cagliostro. It then appeared that in Hélène herself was reincarnated the hapless Queen Marie Antoinette, and that others of the mortals

[1] *Des Indes à la planète Mars*, 1900.

pretensions to a supramundane origin disappear. The Martian cycle is, in his view, a romance pure and simple, the first germs of which are to be found in the speculations of Flammarion and others as to the possible inhabitants of that planet. The descriptions of the social life, the dress, the habits of the Martians are, as he shows, infantile in their simplicity; the landscapes are too obviously suggested by Japanese lacquer and Nankin dishes. And the language—marvellous work of art—is still a work of art, the creation of a mind whose mother-tongue was French. The vowel and consonant sounds are the same as in French; the inflections, the grammar, the construction are all obviously modelled on French; Martian even uses a double word for the negative (*ke ani = ne pas*), employs the same word, *zi*, to express "the" (*la*) and "there" (*là*); and so on in innumerable other cases. In fact, the so-called Martian language is such a language as a young child might construct by substituting for each word in the French dictionary an arbitrary collocation of letters, and for each letter a new and arbitrary symbol. As a work of art it is infantile; as a feat of memory it is prodigious. In the same way M. Flournoy shows that the Arabic, the Hindoo, and the historical elements generally of the other cycles can be traced to sources possibly, in some cases patently, open to the medium.

Again, M. Flournoy finds that Hélène's clairvoyant messages to himself dealt almost exclusively with periods and incidents with which Mrs. Smith was familiar, and of which Hélène might well have heard her mother speak. Nor in any other of Hélène's trance revelations, some of which are curiously like those of Madame Hauffe and other noted seeresses in the past, can M. Flournoy, predisposed though he is to believe in the possibility at least of telepathy, find any positive proof of the acquisition of knowledge through supernormal channels.

Thus, to take one of the most remarkable cases. At a séance held in 1899 Hélène has a vision of a village and a landscape which she cannot recognise, and an old man who possesses himself of her hand, and writes "Chaumontet Syndic." Later, the information was given that the old man was Syndic of Chessenaz in 1839. At another séance Hélène wrote a message of three lines and signed it "Burnier, Curé de Chessenaz."

M. Flournoy made inquiries, and found that there is a small village named Chessenaz in Haute Savoie, about sixteen miles from Geneva, and learnt by correspondence

with the mayor that in 1839 the syndic of the village was one Jean Chaumontet, and the curé was named Burnier. Moreover, the names written through Hélène's hand presented some resemblance to the authentic signatures of these two worthies preserved on a document forwarded by the mayor for M. Flournoy's inspection. Hélène stated that she had never been in Chessenaz; but she had relations in a neighbouring village and had been to visit them. The case cannot, I think, be regarded as affording strong evidence of supernormal faculty.[1]

A case of this kind inevitably suggests that the facts given at the séance were got up beforehand for the purpose of imposing upon the sitters. The same explanation is *prima facie* indicated in some others of Hélène's clairvoyant manifestations, such as some of the personal messages given to M. Flournoy and others, the reproduction—obviously by a person who was ignorant of either language—of fragments of Hindoo and Arabic, and so on. But M. Flournoy is absolutely satisfied of the good faith of his medium; and his five years' acquaintance with her clearly entitles his opinion on the matter to some weight. His own explanation of these incidents, that they represent probably the revival of latent memories, is consistent with his view of the whole case.

Hélène's mediumship is, in fact, according to her sympathetic chronicler, simply a reversion to the dreams of her childhood. As a little girl she was quiet, dreamy, fond of solitude, and very timid. Her tendency to automatism showed itself in various ways; she would draw with a pencil, or compose, with bits of cloth, fantastic designs in an oriental style; she would sit in her chair on Sunday afternoons and see vision after vision arise before her eyes—golden landscapes, ruins standing in the midst of a desert, chimæras on pedestals—foreshadowing, no doubt, the Hindoo and Martian scenery of her later trances. The child saw also several apparitions; one, in particular, representing a monk in a brown robe, with a white cross on his breast, who appeared to her in moments of terror and danger—when attacked by a dog, or addressed with undue freedom by a stranger. In her later years Leopold-Balsamo-Cagliostro claimed that this shadowy protector of her girlhood was none other than himself.

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 406–10. M. Flournoy expresses no decided opinion about this particular case, but he is disposed, without dogmatising on the subject, to take the view that Hélène possesses real telepathic and clairvoyant powers.

Moreover, it appeared that Hélène as a child was somewhat at odds with her surroundings. Her mother thought her unhappy, her father and brothers that she was proud and despised their humble circumstances. There seems to have been some truth in this latter accusation; at any rate, it is recorded that on one occasion she asked her parents whether she was really their own child, and not a changeling. Discontented thus with the limited horizon offered to her, she appears to have turned her thoughts inward, and indulged, as children will, in day-dreams. The growth of the dream was favoured by the child's love of solitude, disinclination to active exertion and artistic temperament. In her inner life she became a queen, and escaped at will into other centuries and other worlds. The habit of dreaming was thus formed, and much of the material which appeared later in her trances was no doubt accumulated in the critical period between her tenth and her twentieth years, when her reveries and hallucinations appear to have been most marked. After the latter date these automatic phenomena, under the pressure of external circumstances, and her absorption in her daily occupations, appear to have been in abeyance, until the Spiritualist séances which began in 1892 gave them a new impetus. From that point they developed rapidly; and the store of dream imagery inherited from her earlier years was enlarged and embellished under the influence, now of Allan Kardec, or Flammarion, or Dumas, now by suggestions of the admiring circle who attended on her trances. In M. Flournoy's view, then, we have in Hélène's trances a reversion to earlier stages of consciousness. The Martian cycle is marked out as the earliest of these childhood reveries, by the naïve and infantile character of its leading conceptions, and by the fact that the Martian "language" shows no trace of any influence but French, whereas Hélène in later childhood had learnt some German.[1] The two other main cycles afford indications not only of a later stage of mental development, but of historical knowledge acquired probably in more recent years. Hélène in the trance is just a child of larger growth, weaving her gorgeous reveries in happy oblivion of the commonplace and sordid restrictions of her waking life. Just as in pathological states of the physical organism

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 242. M. Flournoy points out that the linguistic faculty shown in the construction of the Martian language, of which faculty little trace appears in the waking Hélène, is probably derived from her father, who had a great facility for the acquisition of languages, and could speak five or six European tongues fluently (p. 15).

over, for a period of six months, when she was suffering from general debility and menorrhagia, and unable to attend to her business, the automatic manifestations invaded her waking life almost to the point of actual inconvenience.[1]

Miss Smith's mediumship included manifestations of all kinds. The physical phenomena were, indeed, few, and ceased at an early period. But they were of an unequivocal character; they resembled closely the early manifestations of Mrs. Guppy and other noted mediums, and it is conceivable that under favourable circumstances Hélène's mediumship might have developed on similar lines. The earlier circle at which these phenomena appeared was, however, composed of inharmonious elements, and soon broke up. After the commencement of M. Flournoy's acquaintance with Hélène the physical phenomena appear to have been confined to occasional levitation of tables and transportation of flowers, etc., at Hélène's own home, with her father or mother as witnesses. The only case which M. Flournoy cites in detail occurred during the six months' illness above referred to.

At the earlier séances, however, which were held in the dark, besides movements of the table, etc., there were occasional playing on a piano and other instruments at a distance, and "apports." The "apports" included at first flowers of various kinds, branches of trees, a leaf of ivy bearing in legible characters the name of one of the chief "communicators" at the time. Later, when Hélène's exotic and oriental visions began, the "apports" changed their character correspondingly. The circle now received shells filled with sand and still wet from the sea, a china vase full of water containing a rose, Chinese money, etc., etc.[2]

Here, then, we have the problem of physical mediumship expressed in its simplest terms. Miss Smith is a young woman of good character: she has none of the ordinary motives for deception: an acute observer, with prolonged

[1] Pages 38, 47.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 354–62. As regards the "apports," M. Flournoy contents himself with pointing out the difficulties in the way of the hypothesis of a fourth dimension, or the passage of matter through matter, and prefers to express no opinion as to how the things came into the circle, which sat, naturally, with closed doors. On general grounds, however, partly because of the experiments of Thury, Richet, and Crookes, and partly no doubt because of his conviction of the honesty of the medium, he is inclined to believe in the possible genuineness of the simpler movements—levitation of furniture, transportation of flowers and oranges, etc.—which involve, as he justly remarks, no more cumbrous hypothesis than that of a force radiating from the medium which should be capable of attracting or repelling objects in the neighbourhood.

and exceptionally favourable opportunities for observation, is convinced of her complete honesty. Yet she rolls oranges about the floor when her father is not looking, and smuggles white lilac and sea-shells into the room at a dark séance. Miss Smith is unquestionably an unconscious and involuntary agent in the prolonged drama of the Martian cycle. She is an involuntary, if not wholly an unconscious, agent when she spouts verses from behind the counter in answer to a customer.[1] It is difficult to suppose that these other actions were altogether knowingly and wilfully undertaken. But the "apports" imply a prolonged process of preparation; the objects had to be selected and procured beforehand, introduced surreptitiously into the séance-room, and presented at the appropriate moment to the expectant circle. If the whole process is performed automatically—or, let us say, without the full concurrence of will and consciousness—we have to assume, first, that the programme of each séance is prepared beforehand in some subliminal manufactory. The elaborate structure of Miss Smith's romances would by itself indicate some previous preparation, and we have in certain cases evidence that various scenes of the drama had been rehearsed before their presentation to the circle.[2] We have further to suppose that this process of subliminal preparation may include the performance, during waking life, of acts more or less completely ignored by the ordinary consciousness. We have seen that Miss Smith unwittingly intercalates fragments of Martian or royal writing into her private correspondence. Could she, with equal innocence, put a bunch of white lilac or a china vase into her pocket before the séance?

Many analogous cases can, of course, be quoted of acts performed in obedience to an impulse, the secret springs of which are hidden from the knowledge of the agent. Even dreams occasionally exercise a more or less unconscious influence on the waking life. Tissié narrates a case in which a man repeatedly committed thefts in the daytime in reluctant fulfilment of the dream of the night before. More worthy of credence perhaps is an instance which he relates in his own experience: Walking in the boulevard one day, he found himself executing an involuntary *coup de*

[1] It is probable that these waking automatisms would in many cases almost instantly fade from the memory if there were no external cause—as, in this case, the injunction to note down at once an account of such incidents—to fix their trace in consciousness.

[2] See M. Flournoy's remarks on this point, pp. 70-4.

jarret, and traced the movement to the vague reminiscence of a recent dream, in which he had been pushing a heavy handcart.[1] Moll gives other instances of dreams inducing subsequent action.[2]

Again, when the nervous system is enfeebled by disease, exhaustion, or old age, the patient may commit acts now merely trivial and purposeless, now actually repugnant to his conscious will, as in coprolalia and kleptomania. In certain states, such as masked epilepsy, the patient may continue to act, to all outward seeming, in an intelligent manner, though he himself retains no subsequent recollection of what he has done or said. He may even commit crimes or other actions foreign to his ordinary character. Those rare and striking cases of double consciousness and multiplex personality which have been so much studied of late years in France and America furnish additional illustrations. But these catastrophic disturbances of consciousness are perhaps too remote from ordinary experience to throw much light upon the problem. It is in more commonplace, though hardly more familiar regions, in the facts of hysteria on the one hand, and of post-hypnotic suggestion on the other, that we find the strongest support for the interpretation of physical mediumship above indicated.

In the hysterical patient we see the same exaggerated self-consciousness which characterises the magnetic somnambule and her successor, the spirit medium. In both the master-impulse is the desire to attract attention, sympathy, and admiration. The young woman who in one generation and in one set of social conditions seeks to make herself the centre of her little world by an imaginary spinal complaint, or a prolonged exhibition of saintly dying, at other times and in other circumstances will achieve the same end by surreptitiously ringing the household bells, or by rapping on the legs of her chair. The acts of the hysteric, again, are like those of the medium and the Poltergeist child in their apparent purposelessness. The servant girl who sets fire to the house, or the baby, with no other aim than to get herself talked about, exhibits hardly greater disproportion of means to end than the private medium who keeps up the dull farce of spirit raps and spirit voices for nearly half a century. The study of hysteria paints for us in rather coarser colours just such a weakening of the moral sense, such an inextricable mingling of imposture and reality,

[1] Tissié, *Les Rêves*, pp. 154, 170, etc. Paris, 1890.
[2] *Hypnotism* (English trans.), p. 202. London, 1890.

and such examples of unnatural cunning posing under th mask of innocence, as we find in mediumship. It is hardl necessary to remind the reader that the historical cases whic are claimed by Spiritualists as instances of possession ar classed in modern text-books as exhibitions of hystero epilepsy.

The view of hysteria commonly accepted in this countr regards it as mainly a disease of the will, a perversion c the moral sense, and conceives that the patient knows wha he is doing, and can be taught, by moral admonition o judicious neglect, to do better. But the records of th Salpêtrière and similar institutions furnish grounds for be lieving that, in some cases at any rate, the eclipse alike c wit and will may be more complete than is allowed for in th common view. Janet has recently described a case fro his own *clinique*, which admirably illustrates the presen discussion :—

Some two years back a young woman of twenty-six, Meb, wa brought to Janet who was suffering from hallucinations of a di tressing nature. On making inquiry into the previous histo of the patient, he found, as is not unusually the case, that th hallucinations, which had persisted for many years, had bee originally of a devotional character. Amongst these earlier visio the most conspicuous figure was Saint Philomela, whose reality wa held, not only by the patient herself, but by her mother and aun as incontestably proved by certain substantial tokens—pebble feathers, flowers, and small pieces of cheap jewellery—which th saint had brought with her. These "apports" were sometimes foun lying about on the stairs or in other unlikely spots, as if fallen ther by chance; sometimes they would be discovered by the patient i her bedroom on waking in the morning. On one occasion she thu found several small objects arranged so as to form a cross; a another time a pair of wings was stretched out on the eider-dow quilt. Occasionally, again, these "apports" made their appearanc mysteriously in the daytime in other parts of the house; notabl on one occasion feathers floated down from the ceiling upon th family assembled at their evening meal.

Janet threw Meb into the hypnotic sleep, and she then re vealed the secret of these manifestations: it was she herself, in state of natural somnambulism, who had arranged little pieces c glass in the form of a cross; she who had placed pebbles and silve brooches on the stairway; she who had put a stool on the tabl and, mounted thereon, had lightly fastened small feathers from he quilt with paste to the ceiling of the *salle à manger*, so that the hea of the lamp might bring them fluttering down. In her waking stat she had professed to share the surprise which these portents excite

in her relations, and Janet, after careful study of the case, is inclined to think that the profession was genuine, and that when awake Meb retained no recollection of her skilful preparations for these thaumaturgic exhibitions.[1]

The analogy of post-hypnotic suggestion lends support to Janet's view of the innocence of the waking Meb. The hypnotised subject, at the request of his operator, will commonly undertake in the trance to perform actions, even of a complicated and arduous nature, and will faithfully perform his promise after being aroused from the trance. The interval between promise and fulfilment may vary from minutes to months; the enjoined act may be the blowing out of a candle, the mispronunciation of a household word, a mimic murder, the working out of an elaborate arithmetical calculation, or the vision and salutation of a phantasmal figure. The state of the subject during the performance of the enjoined action varies very widely. In some cases he relapses into a state indistinguishable from that of the original trance, and immediately after the performance will be found to have forgotten the whole incident. In other cases, though the action is carried out with full consciousness, and the agent is not even at a loss for a plausible motive for his conduct, the real source of the impulse is entirely hidden from him. In yet other instances it would seem that there is a faint recollection of the original undertaking; just as in the earlier trances, as already pointed out, the hypnotised subject is often half aware, whilst realising some suggested illusion, that he is acting a part. So Miss Smith, as we have seen, was vaguely aware of the absurdity of her occasional lapses into poetry during business hours. In the early stages of automatism there is often a conflict between the idea automatically suggested and the normal consciousness. The subject is partly conscious of what he is doing, but, not knowing why he does it, feels as if he was not personally responsible for the thing done. Eventually, if the automatism is indulged, it is conceivable that it may become systematised, and the unconsciousness thus become complete, as we have reason to believe it frequently is in the case of post-hypnotic performance of suggestion.

Whilst, however, cases such as that described by Janet have a direct bearing upon our present problem, we should not be justified in pressing the analogy too closely. Meb, as Janet's account of her condition shows, was an hysteric of

[1] *Bulletin de l'Institut Psychologique International*, Dec., 1901.

importance, how far, to wit, the cultivation of what may conveniently be called mediumistic powers involves the risk of injury to the medium. Probably the data are not yet sufficient to admit of the question being fully answered. But even now we can see that there is a wide distinction in this respect between the psychological and the physical manifestations. Crystal-gazing and trance-speaking, even when practised for many years, appear to have no ill effect. One of the best crystal-seers of my acquaintance is a lady in robust health, mentally and physically. Mr. Lang has given similar testimony as regards the crystal-seers whose visions he has described.[1] Mrs. Piper's health would not appear to have suffered by her prolonged course of trances. Hélène Smith could carry on nightly conversations with the inhabitants of other worlds, and retain her waking faculties unimpaired. At a large meeting of Spiritualists and their friends I have picked out two well-known "clairvoyant" mediums, one of them a lady who has kindly given much of her time for purposes of investigation by some of my colleagues, as being, of all the company, conspicuously on the best terms with their physical organisms. The mediumistic seems closely akin to the hypnotic trance, and the automatic phenomena incident to the two states are almost precisely parallel. There are cases in which men and women have been for prolonged periods the subjects of hypnotic experiment without apparent injury to health, intellect, or character.

On the whole, then, the experience so far gained furnishes little ground for apprehension that the investigation of psychological phenomena of this kind in adults, if conducted with reasonable prudence, is likely to have injurious effects on the subject. But the case is different when we turn to physical mediumship. It is obvious, on any view of the case, that the departure from the normal involved in the production of physical phenomena is much greater. And if we accept the view here presented, that such phenomena are invariably fraudulent, the responsibility which rests on those who invite their production is necessarily grave. That in the interests of knowledge even this form of moral vivisection cannot be defended, I, for one, should hesitate to affirm. But no one who realises the true significance of the facts would lightly embark upon an enterprise which involves the risk of such serious moral dangers. To attend the séances of a professional medium is perhaps at

[1] In *The Making of Religion* (1898), chapter on Crystal Visions.

worst to countenance a swindle; to watch the gradual development of innocent automatism into physical mediumship may be to assist at a process of moral degeneration.

For the beginnings of such automatism are like the beginnings of disaffection in the State. Alike in the corporeal and in the political hierarchy certain anarchic elements may free themselves from constitutional control, and work out their own ends, within limits, with impunity. In a fairly stable constitution those limits are soon reached, and the rebellious elements are suppressed, or learn to acquiesce in their limitations. When, however, from stress of external circumstances or inherent defect, the forces of control are enfeebled, the contagion of disorder may spread further, and a permanent centre of rebellion thus be formed—*imperium in imperio*—which may grow strong enough to rival and ultimately even to overthrow the central Government. So, in persons of unstable nervous system it would seem that these automatic manifestations tend to develop until a point is reached at which they pass beyond the control, and, it may be, even beyond the consciousness of the work-a-day self. And unless we are prepared to admit that these dubious phenomena do indeed testify to the working of physical energies unknown to Science, we are forced to recognise that, however trivial and innocent may seem the first steps in "physical mediumship," where the good sense of the medium or his friends does not intervene to stop the further development of the manifestations, they must end either in a dishonesty which carries less disgrace than the dishonesty of the market-place only because the victim may be supposed not wholly responsible, or in a permanent defect of rational control, less dangerous no doubt than recognised forms of mental infirmity, as being partly feigned.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRANCE UTTERANCES OF MRS. PIPER

BY the admission that, while the so-called physical phenomena of Spiritualism afford no evidence of the action of any physical force beyond that exerted by the human muscles, the medium himself in performing the feats may be a not wholly conscious or voluntary agent, the ground is cleared for the real problem of Spiritualism. Inadequate, as we have endeavoured to show, as an explanation even of the physical phenomena, deliberate fraud is seen to be preposterous as a final solution of what are conveniently called the mental manifestations. Automatic oratory and crystal vision may no doubt be feigned, and probably are constantly feigned for trade purposes. But no one who has seriously studied the evidence at first hand can doubt that the entranced subject, at any rate, has in many cases powers of perception and apprehension which are beyond those exercised by normal persons, and which cannot be deliberately acquired by the most prolonged practice. Even the professional "thought-reader" who exhibits his powers on a public platform, or the equally professional "sensitive" who performs at the *clinique* of some Paris physicians, probably owes his success not more to training than to natural endowment. And where trickery is precluded by the very conditions of the experiment we often find indubitable indications of some preternormal receptivity to impressions. The manifestations which have been supposed to afford evidence of such preternormal receptivity in mediumistic or sensitive subjects may conveniently be classed into two main groups. In the first group are included those cases in which the influence, whether of the living operator or of inanimate objects, on the sensitive subject is apparently exercised at close quarters. Such are the alleged instances of community of sensation

described by the earlier Magnetists in this country and on the Continent; the supposed action of metals, gems, drugs, and magnets; the apparent ability of the sensitive to detect mesmerised water and mesmerised coins. With these may also be grouped, perhaps, the exhibitions of Phreno-Mesmerism, where the subject was demonstrably ignorant of the location of the phrenological organs, and most instances of clairvoyance at close quarters, or seeing objects with closed eyes, as described in the reports of the second French Commission, and by Townshend and other English Mesmerists. In some instances, as in the case of Major Buckley's clairvoyants, who professed to be able to read mottoes in sealed nuts, commonplace trickery is probably a sufficient explanation. In other cases, the nature and extent of the success achieved, and the ease with which expert observers, including conjurers, were baffled, force us to look for some agency more equal to the marvels recorded. No doubt in such instances the results may generally be attributed, on the one hand, to hyperæsthesia of the senses of touch, hearing, or sight, conditioned by the somnambulic state; on the other hand, to the indications furnished by the voice, look, gestures, or breathing of the innocent experimenter. Most of the results recorded by the earlier French Magnetists, by Reichenbach, by Elliotson and his contemporaries, may, so far as the records enable us to judge, be safely attributed to the effect of such unconscious suggestion acting on specially receptive, that is, generally, hyperæsthetic, subjects. Nor, until similar results are obtained under conditions which preclude the operation of suggestion by normal channels—and I have failed so far to find any record of such experiments—need we look for any other explanation of the alleged action at a distance of metals, drugs, and magnets, the transference of sensibility, and similar marvels vouched for by modern French observers.

In a few rare instances in the past, however, as I have endeavoured to show in discussing the records of early Mesmerism, especially in this country,[1] the results would seem to go beyond anything which, in the stated conditions, the acumen of the most hyperæsthetic sensitive could gather from the most apocalyptic of experimenters. It is not easy thus to explain all manifestations noted by Pététin, Bertrand, and Elliotson; it is still more difficult to suppose that Braid, who was, at any rate, fully alive to the risks of unconscious suggestion, should in his experiments in Phreno-Mesmerism

[1] See above, Book I. chaps. viii. and ix.

have so flagrantly neglected the precautions which he was constantly enforcing on others.

In the second group are placed the alleged instances of the perception of distant scenes and persons. Clairvoyance of this kind bulks, as we have seen, very largely in the early history of Spiritualism. As a matter of fact, however, from 1848 onwards until a quite recent date, whether because the observers were generally lacking in scientific training and habits of accurate observation, or because the spurious physical phenomena diverted an undue share of interest to themselves, we find amongst the numerous references to clairvoyance hardly any records sufficiently detailed to be worth consideration. Prior to 1848 the trance utterances of Cahagnet's somnambules,[1] and some of the clairvoyant descriptions recorded by Gregory, Haddock, and other English Mesmerists merit most attention.[2]

Speaking generally, however, the instances alike of community of sensation and of clairvoyance at a distance recorded by the older observers are scarcely sufficient in themselves to afford a case for investigation. The observers were, if not always untrained, in almost every case ignorant of the special dangers to be guarded against and the special precautions necessary; moreover, the conditions and surroundings are, for the most part, very imperfectly described, and the results are generally vitiated by the amiable confidence professed by the observer in the good faith of his sensitive—a confidence which, being founded on experience of the sensitive in his normal state, was, as we now know, in the actual circumstances irrelevant. Again, in most cases of "travelling" clairvoyance, we are told too little of the antecedents and general circumstances of the case, or of the precautions, if any, which were taken to ensure that the information uttered in the trance could not have reached the clairvoyant by normal means. And, finally, except in the case of Cahagnet's somnambule, Adéle, the records are sporadic, and the accounts given, which have obviously been selected and preserved because of their special excellence, may merely represent the few lucky hits out of a very large number of barren experiments. I have already pointed out that the records of the clairvoyance shown by Alexis Didier are vitiated by considerations of an analogous kind, Alexis being able to choose the one or two persons to whom he furnished successful tests out of the large number present at his séance.[3]

[1] Book I. chap. vi. [2] Book I. chap. x. [3] Vol. I. pp. 147–8.

But since the foundation, in 1882, of the Society for Psychical Research, and the more rigorous methods of experiment inaugurated by Professor W. F. Barrett and his colleagues, the problem has assumed a new aspect. Within the last twenty years a large mass of evidence has been accumulated for the operation of some faculty which can take cognisance of things outside the scope of any possible extension of the known senses. This hypothetical faculty, which is assumed to represent the action, unmediated by the external sense-organs, of one mind or brain upon another mind or brain, has been provisionally named *thought-transference* or *telepathy*. Space will not permit here of any but the briefest reference to the bulk of this evidence. It may be conveniently grouped under three main heads.

(1) *Experimental.* The one party to the experiment, who may be close at hand, in an adjoining room, or at a distance of some miles, endeavours to impress upon the other party some idea with which his own mind is occupied at the moment—an object in the room, a number, a mental picture, and so on. In a few rare instances the agent has succeeded in evoking experimentally an apparition of himself before the distant percipient.

(2) *Spontaneous.* A large number of instances of apparitions coinciding with death, intimations of illness and accident, have been critically examined and, as far as the circumstances would permit, verified by careful inquiries, inspection of letters and diaries, and collation of other corroborative testimony.

(3) *Trance observations.* Within the last ten years a third source of information—the trance utterances of certain clairvoyants—has assumed considerable, and may ultimately assume preponderant importance. Under the conditions observed by Dr. Hodgson in the case of Mrs. Piper, the best-known of these clairvoyants, this form of inquiry more nearly resembles in rigidity and precision an experimental investigation in the laboratory than a mere record of spontaneous mediumistic outpourings.

Mrs. Piper is a typical medium. By a fortunate combination of circumstances she has been saved from the temptation, to which nearly every other clairvoyant medium of note has at one time or another succumbed, to advertise her gifts by resorting to physical phenomena.[1] For many years past her

[1] So far as I am aware, no other clairvoyant medium of note since 1848 has failed at one time or another to exhibit physical phenomena, if only to the extent of table-rapping, as part of her mediumistic gifts. Even with the earlier French

trance manifestations have been the subject of accurate and continuous observation and record, and have no doubt in the process been modified by the constant suggestions received from her environment. But at the outset she appears to have represented the ordinary phases of trance mediumship as exhibited in America fifteen or twenty years ago. In 1885 she came under the observation of Professor William James, of Harvard, and two years later of Dr. Hodgson and other members of the American Society for Psychical Research. From Dr. Hodgson's subsequent inquiries it would appear that Mrs. Piper in 1884 had visited, for medical advice, a professional clairvoyant, whose leading control purported to be a French physician named Finné, or Finnett. At her second visit Mrs. Piper herself became entranced, and was controlled by an Indian girl named (*mirabile dictu*) Chlorine. Thereafter other controls appeared—Mrs. Siddons, Bach, Longfellow, Commodore Vanderbilt, Loretta Ponchini. A year or two later, when she was first seen by W. James and others, a French doctor had succeeded in obtaining almost exclusive control. The name of this French doctor was reported to be Phinuit. For the last fifteen years Mrs. Piper in her trances has been under the almost continuous observation and supervision of members of the S.P.R., chiefly Dr. Hodgson, and nearly all her utterances—especially during the latter part of this period—have been exactly recorded. For some years past, moreover, the task of preserving a complete record has been simplified, as the revelations through the trance have for the most part been given through her hand in writing, instead of orally, as at the outset.

Here is a typical illustration of one of her trance conversations. The case is chosen partly as being, by exception, a condensed description only, and, therefore, short enough to quote, partly because the narrator, Professor Shaler, of Harvard, is a well-known man of science, and by no means

and German somnambules, as shown in Book I., stone-throwing and other movements of objects occasionally appeared. And since that date the collocation is so general as to be extremely significant. I have already dwelt at length on the cases of Home and Stainton Moses. It is enough to say here that Stainton Moses appears in this respect to be typical of private mediums generally. The chief private clairvoyants, whose experiences have been recorded by the S.P.R., have also been on occasion mediums for physical phenomena. Sometimes the phenomena have been recorded elsewhere, under an assumed name; sometimes they have taken place only in the family circle or amongst intimate friends, and have not been made public at all. But the fact of their occurrence in such circumstances, where the operator could have had no adequate or readily intelligible motive for fraud, affords strong confirmation of the view taken in the text that mediumship is a pathologic state.

prepossessed in favour of Mrs. Piper or the hypothesis of telepathy. The sitting was held on May 25th, 1894, at the house of Professor James, in Cambridge, Boston; Professor Shaler, with his wife and Professor James, who was taking notes, being present. Professor Shaler writes to Professor James on June 6th:—[1]

"MY DEAR JAMES,—At the sitting with Mrs. Piper on May 25th I made the following notes:—

"As you remember, I came to the meeting with my wife; when Mrs. Piper entered the trance state Mrs. Shaler took her hand. After a few irrelevant words, my wife handed Mrs. Piper an engraved seal, which she knew, though I did not, had belonged to her brother, a gentleman from Richmond, Virginia, who died about a year ago. At once Mrs. Piper began to make statements clearly relating to the deceased, and in the course of the following hour she showed a somewhat intimate acquaintance with his affairs, those of his immediate family, and those of the family in Hartford, Conn., with which the Richmond family had had close social relations. The statements made by Mrs. Piper, in my opinion, entirely exclude the hypothesis that they were the results of conjectures, directed by the answers made by my wife. I took no part in the questioning, but observed very closely all that was done.

"On the supposition that the medium had made very careful preparation for her sittings in Cambridge, it would have been possible for her to have gathered all the information which she rendered by means of agents in the two cities, though I must confess that it would have been rather difficult to have done the work.

"The only distinctly suspicious features were that certain familiar baptismal names were properly given, while those of an unusual sort could not be extracted, and also that one or two names were given correctly as regards the ceremony of baptism or the directory, but utterly wrong from the point of view of family usage. Thus the name of a sister-in-law of mine, a sister of my wife's, was given as Jane, which is true by the record, but in forty years' experience of an intimate sort I never knew her to be called Jane—in fact, I did not at first recognise who was meant.

"While I am disposed to hold to the hypothesis that the performance is one that is founded on some kind of deceit, I must confess that close observation of the medium made on me the impression that she is honest. Seeing her under any other conditions, I should not hesitate to trust my instinctive sense as to the truthfulness of the woman.

"I venture also to note, though with some hesitancy, the fact that the ghost of the ancient Frenchman who never existed, but who purports to control Mrs. Piper, though he speaks with a first-

[1] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xiii. pp. 524, 525.

rate stage French accent, does not, so far as I can find, make the characteristic blunders in the order of his English words which we find in actual life. Whatever the medium is, I am convinced that this 'influence' is a preposterous scoundrel.

"I think I did not put strongly enough the peculiar kind of knowledge which the medium seems to have concerning my wife's brother's affairs. Certain of the facts, as, for instance, those relating to the failure to find his will after his sudden death, were very neatly and dramatically rendered. They had the real life quality. So, too, the name of a man who was to have married my wife's brother's daughter, but who died a month before the time fixed for the wedding, was correctly given, both as regards surname and Christian name, though the Christian name was not remembered by my wife or me.

"I cannot determine how probable it is that the medium, knowing she was to have a sitting with you in Cambridge, or rather a number of them, took pains to prepare for the tests by carefully working up the family history of several of your friends. If she had done this for thirty or so persons, I think she could, though with some difficulty, have gained just the kind of knowledge which she rendered. She would probably have forgotten that my wife's brother's given name was Legh, and that of his mother Gabriella, while she remembered that of Mary and Charles, and also that of a son in Cambridge, who is called Waller.[1] So, too, the fact that all trouble on account of the missing will was within a fortnight after the death of Mr. Page cleared away by the action of the children was unknown. The deceased is represented as still troubled, though he purported to see just what was going on in his family.

"I have given you a mixture of observations and criticisms; let me say that I have no firm mind about the matter. I am curiously and yet absolutely uninterested in it for the reason that I don't see how I can exclude the hypothesis of fraud, and until that can be excluded no advance can be made.

"When I took the medium's hand, I had my usual experience with them, a few preposterous compliments concerning the clearness of my understanding, and nothing more.

"Faithfully yours,
"N. S. SHALER."

The foregoing account, though of course not so valuable as a completer record, conveys with sufficient accuracy the impression left on impartial observers by a fairly successful interview. Professor Shaler, it will be seen, is confident that

[1] Professor Shaler's argument is scarcely sound. On the assumption that Mrs. Piper had got up these particulars beforehand, she would probably have made a point of *remembering* the unusual names, though she might have forgotten, or misapplied, the common ones.

the information given about family affairs was too detailed to be due to mere guessing, and could not have been extracted by skilful "fishing" from Mrs. Shaler and himself. There remains the supposition that Mrs. Piper had got up the information beforehand, for the express purpose of bringing it out at this interview. In this particular case there is no great improbability in such a supposition. The visit to Cambridge (Boston) had, no doubt, been decided on some time beforehand. Mrs. Piper could easily guess that she would be likely to meet at Professor James' house other members of the Harvard Faculty; and even if it is assumed that the precaution generally taken at these séances —that of introducing the sitters under assumed names—was duly observed in this case,[1] Mrs. Piper would no doubt, on the hypothesis of fraud, have made it her business to procure beforehand photographs or personal descriptions of all the likely sitters. Again, such a source of the information given in the trance would be in accordance with precedent. Apart from the general presumption in favour of a known cause, fraud, in preference to an unknown cause—clairvoyance, telepathy, or spirits—we have evidence that fraud of the precise kind indicated by Professor Shaler has been, and probably is still employed, especially by American clairvoyants.

Now the fact that nearly all those who have had sittings with Mrs. Piper have been impressed by her transparent honesty is, in strictness, irrelevant. We have seen that many of Foster's and Home's sitters were equally confident of the medium's honesty, and that, generally, the ability to impress his clients with confidence in his integrity is an essential part of a medium's equipment. Further, it should be remembered that the conviction of the medium's honesty in this case is founded on experience of Mrs. Piper in her waking state, whereas the revelations proceed from Mrs. Piper entranced. Nor would the genuineness of Mrs. Piper's trance, if it could be substantiated, be conclusive. The reproduction in a genuine trance of knowledge fraudulently acquired is not more difficult to believe than the fraudulent performance of conjuring tricks in a state of trance. It is more to the point that all those who have made a careful study at first hand of Mrs. Piper's trance utterances, and who are therefore best qualified to speak—Professor W. James, Dr. Hodgson, Sir Oliver Lodge, the late F. W. H. Myers, Mrs. H. Sidgwick, Dr. Walter Leaf, Professor Romaine Newbold,

[1] Professor Shaler, it will be seen, does not refer to this point.

Professor J. H. Hyslop—have put on record their conviction that the results attained cannot be explained by fraud or misrepresentation. It is, unfortunately, impracticable within the limited space at my command, especially in view of the voluminous nature of the records, to give here a fair sample of the evidence on which this conviction is founded. Two or three more extracts from brief descriptions of séances must suffice. For fuller information the reader is referred to the *Proceedings S. P. R.*, where he will find many accounts of séances given in full, and to Mr. Myers' forthcoming book on *Human Personality*.[1]

Here, for instance, is an account by Professor J. Estlin Carpenter, of Oxford, of a sitting with Mrs. Piper on 13th December, 1894. The sitting again took place at the house of Professor James, who prefaces the account with the following note:—[2]

"Mrs. James and Mrs. Piper were in the same room when Professor J. Estlin Carpenter, of Oxford, entered. He was introduced as Mr. Smith to Mrs. Piper, and withdrew, speaking to her, to the end of the room. His wife then entered, and was greeted by Mrs. James inadvertently as 'Mrs. Carpenter,' which, of course, annuls the best test of this sitting."

The following is the statement by Professor Carpenter:—

"CAMBRIDGE, *December 14th*, 1894.

"DEAR PROFESSOR JAMES,—I had a sitting yesterday with Mrs. Piper at your house, and was greatly interested with the results obtained, as they were entirely unexpected by me. Various persons were named and described whom we could not identify (my wife was present); but the names of my father and mother were correctly given, with several details which were in no way present to my mind at the time. The illness from which my father was

[1] The earliest account of Mrs. Piper is to be found in the Report on Mediumistic Phenomena by Professor W. James (*Proc. Am. S. P. R.*, p. 102). The accounts of her trance utterances published in the *Proceedings* of the English Society are extremely voluminous, but the evidence cannot fairly be appraised without an attentive study of at least some of these records. See *Proceedings S. P. R.*, vol. vi. pp. 436–650, containing records edited respectively by the late F. W. H. Myers, Dr. Oliver Lodge, and Dr. Walter Leaf; vol. viii. pp. 1–167, containing a discussion and further detailed reports of sittings edited by Dr. Hodgson; vol. xiii. pp. 284–582, a further report and records by Dr. Hodgson; vol. xiv. pp. 6–49, a further record by Professor Romaine Newbold; vol. xvi. (649 pages) consists of a report and record of a series of sittings by Professor Hyslop. There are critical articles on the subject by myself, vol. xiv. pp. 50–78, by Mrs. Sidgwick and Mr. Andrew Lang, vol. xv. pp. 16–38 and 39–52 respectively. Further material is awaiting publication in the *Proceedings*.

[2] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xiii. pp. 528, 529.

suffering at the time of his death was identified, but not the accident which took him from us. A penknife which I happened to have with me was rightly referred to its place on the desk in his study, and after considerable hesitation Mrs. Piper wrote out the word *organ* when I asked concerning other objects in the room. She added spontaneously a very remarkable item about which I was in no way thinking, viz. that on Sunday afternoons or evenings (her phrase was 'twilight') we were accustomed to sing there together. She stated correctly that my mother was older than my father, but died after him; and she connected her death with my return from Switzerland in a manner that wholly surprised me, the fact being that her last illness began two or three days after my arrival at home from Lucerne. She gave the initials of my wife's name rightly, and addressed words to her from her father, whose first name, George, was correct. She also desired me in my father's name not to be anxious about some family matters (which have only recently come to my knowledge), though their nature was not specified. Finally, though I should have mentioned this first, as it was at the outset of the interview, she told me that I was about to start on a voyage, and described the vessel in general terms, though she could not give me its name, or tell me the place where it was going. I saw enough to convince me that Mrs. Piper possesses some very extraordinary powers, but I have no theory at all as to their nature or mode of exercise.

"Believe me, faithfully yours,

"J. ESTLIN CARPENTER."

Here, again, is an account given by the well-known French author, M. Paul Bourget, who paid two visits to Mrs. Piper in December, 1893. The account, which is taken from the *Figaro*, January 14th, 1895, apparently relates to the first of these visits.[1]

"Mrs. P.—me tenait les mains, et elle touchait en même temps une toute petite pendule de voyage ayant appartenu à quelqu'un qu'elle ne pouvait pas avoir connu,—un peintre qui s'est tué dans des circonstances particulièrement tristes de folie momentanée. Comment arriva-t-elle à me dire et cette profession de l'ancien propriétaire de la pendule et sa folie, et le genre même de son suicide? Y avait-il une communication entre mon esprit et son esprit à elle, dédoublé dans cette mystérieuse personnalité du docteur Lyonnais? Mes mains, qu'elle tenait entre les siennes, lui revelaient-elles, par des frémissements perceptibles à l'hyperacuité de ses nerfs, mes impressions sous chacun de ses mots, et avait-elle conservé, dans son sommeil, un pouvoir de se laisser guider par ces

[1] An account of M. Bourget's second visit will be found in *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xiii. pp. 495–99.

minuscules jalons? Ou bien, car il faut toujours réserver une place au scepticisme, était-elle une comédienne incomparable et qui devinait mes pensées au ton seul de mes questions et de mes réponses? . . . Mais non. Elle était sincère. Les physiologistes qui l'ont observée dans ses crises ont trop souvent reconnu le caractère magnétique de son sommeil à des indices mécaniques qui ne trompent pas. Tout ce que je peux conclure des détails réellement extraordinaires qu'elle me donna à moi, un étranger de passage, sur un disparu, et dont je n'avais parlé à personne dans son entourage, c'est que l'esprit a des procédés de connaître, non soupçonnés par notre analyse."

These three records may be taken as fairly typical. The information given, it will no doubt be admitted, is beyond the scope of chance coincidence, or of skilful conjecture based upon hints let drop by the sitter during the interview. On the supposition that Mrs. Piper worked up the *dossiers* of her sitters beforehand, she might conceivably obtain her facts in various ways—(*a*) by her own observations, *e.g.* by reading private letters; (*b*) by information derived from other mediums; (*c*) by the employment of private inquiry agents. Probably all these methods have been and are habitually employed by professional clairvoyants.[1] The conviction entertained by those who are best qualified to judge that Mrs. Piper's information was not obtained by such methods is based partly on the precautions employed, partly on the nature of the information itself.

[1] It is, of course, extremely difficult to get trustworthy evidence on a matter of this kind, mainly because the persons whose testimony would be most valuable—ex-mediums and ex-agents of mediums—are by the nature of the case hopelessly discredited as witnesses. I have met a man who professed to have worked up cases for Slade and others in this country. He would not give me details except for payment, and obviously testimony of that kind when purchased would be of even less value than when tendered gratuitously. Truesdell (*Bottom Facts of Spiritualism*, p. 308, etc.) shows how the thing could be done. The medium or his agent, in the capacity of a book-canvasser, etc., would thoroughly work a given town or district and make notes of all the information gained, and would return a few months later to reap the harvest by giving clairvoyant sittings. There is a belief, no doubt well founded, amongst the more clear-headed American Spiritualists that there is an elaborate organisation for obtaining and interchanging information thus acquired amongst all the members of the guild. It is perhaps in this way that we may explain the peculiar good fortune of well-known Spiritualists in obtaining "tests." Some of Mrs. Piper's sitters had previously visited other mediums; but if the precautions taken to prevent her knowing the names of the sitters were effectual, as they probably were in most cases, it seems hardly likely that she could have utilised any information thus gained.

Again, except in this country, where she stayed for some time in private houses of members of the Society, Mrs. Piper's opportunities of personally acquiring information by surreptitiously reading letters or questioning servants appear to have been extremely limited. But, of course, it must always be

As regards the first point, Mrs. Piper has been under close scrutiny and supervision, chiefly by Dr. Hodgson, for many years, and no suspicious circumstance of any kind has come to light. But the precaution on which we are entitled chiefly to rely is that nearly all her sittings for more than ten years past have been arranged beforehand, again mainly by Dr. Hodgson, without the names of the sitters being communicated to her. In almost every case the sitter has been unknown to her by sight, and has been introduced to her under the pseudonym of "Smith"—the incognito being strictly preserved, at any rate throughout the first sitting.

In some instances, especially in this country, the sitting was improvised for the benefit of a chance caller, of whose very existence Mrs. Piper can hardly be supposed to have been aware. In one or two cases the sitter, with praiseworthy caution, concealed his identity even from Dr. Hodgson. That occasionally during this long term of years carelessness or malign chance may have offered a loophole for fraud is, of course, not improbable. The strength of Mrs. Piper's case lies in the high proportion of successful sittings, and in the extraordinarily high proportion of correct statements at many individual sittings—proportions so high as to render the hypothesis of fraud very difficult to sustain.

An argument which carries hardly less weight will be found in the nature of the information itself. Obviously, if Mrs. Piper acquired her information from such sources as newspaper obituaries, registers, and tombstones, or as a result of reading private letters and making inquiries amongst servants and tradespeople, we should expect that the information, taken as a whole, would betray its origin. We are not left wholly to barren speculation in the matter. Amongst the records of clairvoyance in the past we do find some which more or less clearly point to such an origin, and which indicate also pretty clearly the high-water mark of effort in this direction. There are three clairvoyants known to us whose records are sufficiently full to permit of some comparison being made. These three are Adéle Maginot, Alexis Didier, and Stainton Moses.[1] Now the "clairvoyance"

assumed that a medium will avail himself of opportunities of this kind, or rather, will make it his business to seek for opportunities. Truesdell (*op. cit.*, p. 185, etc.) describes a slate-writing séance of his own where he was enabled, from knowledge acquired by reading a private letter in the sitter's greatcoat-pocket, to give some surprising "clairvoyant" tests.

[1] Home should perhaps be added, but the records of Home's clairvoyance are certainly less complete, and it is obvious that he enjoyed exceptional opportunities for acquiring information by illicit means.

of Stainton Moses consisted almost exclusively of the reproduction of names, dates, and other concrete facts in the lives of the persons represented, all of which facts could have been acquired from newspapers, books, and other public sources. In no single instance are we forced to resort to any explanation more recondite than the subconscious reproduction of latent memories. The case of Alexis Didier is typical of the clairvoyance of his time, and, indeed, of "travelling" clairvoyance generally. He does not deal much in names and dates, but he is concerned mainly with personal descriptions of living persons, of houses and parks, of dogs and other domestic animals, and more rarely of quite recent incidents. Now it is to be remarked that in the case of Alexis Didier, at any rate, fraud was not only conceivable, but highly probable; and that the descriptions of places and recent events are precisely the things which a private inquiry agent would find it most easy to supply.

There are, indeed, a few instances in which Mrs. Piper, like Stainton Moses, has given in her trance utterances names and other facts which might without difficulty have been obtained from the newspapers or similar public sources. But the information in these cases is inaccurate and confused, and the obvious comment is that the "controls" of the English medium managed this sort of thing much better.[1] Again, Mrs. Piper is very vague about dates; she prefers to give Christian names rather than surnames, and of Christian names the commoner rather than the more out of the way; she rarely attempts to give descriptions of houses or places, and her attempts in this direction are commonly failures. In other words, she is weakest precisely where the pseudo-medium is most successful. Her real strength lies in describing the diseases, personal idiosyncrasies, thoughts, feelings, and character of the sitter and his friends; their loves, hates, quarrels, sympathies, and mutual relationships in general; trivial but significant incidents in their past histories, and the like. Not only is information on such

[1] The cases referred to are those of the Rev. Robert West, where the full names of the deceased, the place of his burial, and the text on his tombstone were correctly given; the case of Porter Brewster Guernsey (given as John Gerster), of Lake City, drowned in Lake Pepin; the case of William N——; and that of Gracie X——. In all these instances many correct particulars were given, including names of persons and places, which could have been obtained from newspapers, but the information was curiously confused and inaccurate, suggesting rather imperfect reminiscence of information casually acquired than the deliberate "getting up" of the case for fraudulent purposes (see *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. viii. pp. 35-43). In any case, these four cases stand apart from the general bulk of Mrs. Piper's utterances.

points as these more difficult to acquire by normal means, but it is obviously much more difficult to retain in the memory.

But if in their general character Mrs. Piper's trance utterances differ widely from those of Stainton Moses and Alexis Didier, both of whom, as we have already seen, are open, on quite other grounds, to strong suspicion of fraudulent practices, they bear, on the other hand, a strong resemblance to those of an earlier medium against whose good faith no suspicious circumstance has been alleged—Adéle Maginot, the somnambule employed by Alphonse Cahagnet. Like Mrs. Piper, Adéle Maginot appears to have been vague about names and dates, and sparing in her descriptions of scenery and the furniture of rooms. But in all that pertained to the emotional side of her interlocutors' reminiscences her information was frequently as copious as it was apparently accurate. She would describe in unmistakable terms the dress, personal appearance, physical and moral characteristics of persons whom in life she had certainly never seen, of whose existence she can hardly have been aware. The points of agreement between Adéle's revelations and Mrs. Piper's, and their marked differences from the outpourings of the common run of professional clairvoyants, seem too marked to be purely accidental.

Partly, then, from the stringent nature of the precautions taken and the high measure of success nevertheless achieved, partly from the nature of the revelations themselves, we are led to the conclusion that Mrs. Piper's trance utterances indicate the possession of some supernormal power of apprehension—at lowest the capacity to read the unspoken, and even unconscious, thoughts and emotions of other minds. To many of those who have investigated her trances, including Dr. Hodgson himself, the evidence appears to go beyond this, and to point to communication with spirits of the dead. Certainly here, if in any case in the whole history of Spiritualism, is such evidence to be found. Many of the personalities, or pseudo-personalities, who speak, write, and act through the organism of the entranced Mrs. Piper present so faithful a mimicry of the persons whose names they assume as to have prevailed in some cases over the natural reluctance of sceptical outsiders. The most effective of these impersonations is that of the so-called G. P. G. P. was a young journalist and author of some repute, an acquaintance of Dr. Hodgson, who died suddenly from the effects of an accident in February, 1892. A few weeks after

his death he purported to possess Mrs. Piper's organism, and from that time onwards for some years has assumed the chief control, has carried on many and prolonged conversations with Dr. Hodgson and others, and furnished numerous proofs of his knowledge of the doings and affairs of the person whom he represents. He has made reference to G. P.'s manuscripts and personal effects, to private conversations which took place before his death, and to many other matters betraying an intimate acquaintance with G. P.'s own concerns and those of his friends. One of the most striking proofs of identity furnished is his constant recognition, amongst the numerous persons who have since his death consulted Mrs. Piper, of those known personally to G. P. when alive. Not only so, but the supposed G. P. has accorded to each his due measure of welcome, whether as near relation, friend, or mere acquaintance. Nor is Dr. Hodgson able to find any instance where such recognition has been incorrectly accorded. There have been many other trance personations speaking through Mrs. Piper's organism which have been accepted by sitters as genuine representations of deceased friends.

To other students of the records, including the present writer, the evidence nevertheless appears at present insufficient to justify the Spiritualist view, even as a working hypothesis. It would be impossible, within the limits of our remaining space, to set forth fully the reasons for regarding these trance personalities as illustrations of the plastic powers of the medium's own spirit, rather than as representing alien intelligences. But the case is open, of course, though to a less extent perhaps than in any instance previously recorded, to the objection that the emotional state of the sitters inevitably tends to bias their judgment; and that evidence of identity derived from gesture, manner, or even idiosyncrasy of speech, is peculiarly difficult to appraise dispassionately. Again, the ordinary characteristics of the secondary personality, as observed in cases where the agency of the dead cannot reasonably be invoked, can be traced, though no doubt more skilfully disguised than in any of her predecessors, through most of Mrs. Piper's impersonations. We find the same tedious and childish repetition; the same lack of any sense of proportion; the tendency to dwell on the concrete and trivial; the tentative and piecemeal exhibition of information, as if angling for signs of assent or dissent from the sitter; extreme suggestibility; and, above all, disingenuousness and reluctance to admit ignorance or mistakes. No doubt, as Dr. Hodgson argues with good show of reason,

none of these suspicious circumstances are inconsistent wi
the supposition that the spirit who is endeavouring to co
municate through Mrs. Piper's organism is hampered by a
imperfect acquaintance with the mechanism to be operate
is distracted by various interruptions from both the earth
and the spiritual side, and is possibly further hindered by t
very fact of partially resuming the vesture of mortality.
must be conceded to Dr. Hodgson's ingenious argument th
we have no right to reject these utterances as unauthen
because they do not conform to our preconceived idea
what communications from the dead should be. It is i
possible, however, to disregard their general resemblance
other manifestations of secondary personality; a resemblan
which is still further emphasised by the fact that Mrs. Pipe
spirits, like those of her predecessors, indulge in a good d
of vague talk about the conditions of planetary life, ast
bodies, and other matters which have formed the commo
place of mediumistic revelations for two or three generatio
past.

But, after all, the criterion by which the hypothesis
spirit intercourse must ultimately be tested consists in t
nature of the information furnished. It is contended that
many cases the information given through the hand of M
Piper, even when the hypothesis of thought-transferen
from distant friends is exploited to the full, is of such
character that it cannot plausibly be ascribed to a
intelligence but that of the spirit from whom indeed it pu
ports to proceed. My own view is, briefly, that the instanc
which seem to point to some external source of inspiratio
are neither sufficiently numerous nor sufficiently free fro
ambiguity to warrant any such inference. The accura
appreciation of evidence of this kind is an almost impossib
task. As already indicated, Mrs. Piper's trance utterance
though less cumbered with incoherence, circumlocution, an
ambiguity, designed or fortuitous, than those of her pr
decessors, yet contain sufficient alloy to make the extricatio
of the pure metal a delicate matter. Her trance personalit
does not commonly deal in precise and categorical state
ments of fact: names are frequently uttered or written piec
meal and in tentative form: diseases are diagnosed b
symptoms often by no means distinctive: persons ar
indicated by descriptions of a dubious kind: incidents an
relationships are shadowed forth by obscure and inadequat
hints. In a word, the information given is very generall
incomplete or of uncertain meaning, and needs expe

interpretation. I have already said that, taken as a whole, the evidence produces on my own mind the almost complete conviction that Mrs. Piper in trance is possessed of some faculty beyond the normal—a faculty at the lowest of tapping the thoughts of her interviewers. But beyond that it does not seem to me safe to go. Some of the most successful shots may be ascribed to chance-coincidence, which must operate to some extent in so wide a field: many more may be due to cunning conjecture and inference on the part of the entranced medium, whose training and experience for some years past have afforded unprecedented opportunities for developing any native gift in that direction. But the most serious objection is that the difficulty and uncertainty of interpretation give wide scope to the unconscious bias of the interpreter. How much room is as a matter of fact left for difference of interpretation may be illustrated by a single example. Dr. J. H. Hyslop, Professor of Logic and Ethics in Columbia University, New York, has lately published[1] a record of a series of sittings held with Mrs. Piper in 1898 and 1899. No pains have been spared to make the record complete. His report, which is considerably longer than the present volumes, contains the verbatim record of seventeen sittings, with exhaustive commentaries on the evidential aspect of the utterances, and accounts of experiments designed to elucidate the supposed difficulties of trance communication. The conclusion at which Professor Hyslop arrives, after an investigation in which no item of the evidence has failed to be weighed and analysed, and no possible source of error would seem to have escaped consideration, is, briefly, that the explanation which best fits the facts, and the only explanation so far adduced which fits them all, is that of spirit communication. My own view, after an examination less exhaustive, no doubt, but by no means superficial, is that these last recorded trance utterances of Mrs. Piper do not obviously call for any supernormal explanation. I cannot point to a single instance in which a precise and unambiguous piece of information has been furnished of a kind which could not have proceeded from the medium's own mind, working upon the materials provided and the hints let drop by the sitter. I agree with Professor Hyslop in rejecting telepathy as the explanation of these latest revelations, not, however, as being inadequate, but as

[1] As vol. xvi. of the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research, London.

being superfluous. I do not ask the reader to accept
judgment on the case. The point of the illustration is t
a subject in which it is possible for two honest and fai
competent investigators from the same set of facts to ded
such divergent conclusions is clearly not yet sufficien
advanced to serve as a basis for any but the most mod
generalisations.

Once more, a weighty objection to accepting Mrs. Pip
trance personalities at their own valuation is that they h
again and again failed to answer the test questions put
them, and that the manner of their failure has often pro
more fatal to their claim than the failure itself. Thus,
soi-disant Hannah Wild on several occasions dictated w
professed to be a copy of the contents of a sealed le
written by the real Hannah Wild before her death, for
express purpose of the test; and all these versions w
entirely wide of the mark.[1] The spirit of Stainton Mo
asked to furnish the real names of his earthly guides,[2] wh
were unknown to his questioner, professed on sev
occasions to give the names, and on each occasion g
them incorrectly.[3] G. P. himself, when pressed to ment
the names of two persons associated with him in a cert
undertaking, excused himself in the first instance on
ground that the test would be unsatisfactory, as the nar
were known to one of those present. Later he gave t
names which were not correct.[4]

In short, these trance personalities, though more lifel
and better informed than most, appear to have the comm
failings of their class. It is impossible to believe that
these trance utterances we are listening to authentic a
unembarrassed messages from the dead. Nor, notwithstan
ing the subtle and convincing character of some of
impersonations, and the fact that in many cases the inform
tion furnished has been known to no one present, possil
even to no one living, is it easy to accept the hypothe
of communion with the dead even in the modified fo
suggested by Mrs. Sidgwick.[5] What evidence could
regarded as sufficient to prove such agency it is diffic

[1] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. viii. pp. 10–15.

[2] Rector, Doctor, Imperator, Mentor, etc., the "guides" of Stainton Mo
were supposed to represent historical personages, whose names had been revea
by Moses in his lifetime to two or three intimate friends only.

[3] *Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. xv. pp. 23–4.

[4] *Ibid.*, vol. xiii. p. 303.

[5] *Ibid.*, vol. xv. p. 37.

to say; on the facts so far adduced we can but say, "Not proven."[1]

[1] Critical examinations of the evidence afforded by Mrs. Piper's trance utterances for communication with spirits of the dead will be found in articles by Dr. Leaf (*Proc.*, vol. vi. p. 558), Mrs. H. Sidgwick and Mr. Andrew Lang (*Proc.*, vol. xv. pp. 16 and 39), Marcel Mangin (*Annales des Sciences Psychiques*, July–Oct., 1898). All these writers, it should be pointed out, though indisposed to accept the spirit hypothesis, are of opinion that Mrs. Piper's trance utterances cannot be explained by fraud. Dr. Hodgson's own account of the genesis of the Phinuit control should also be referred to (*Proc.*, vol. viii. p. 46).

and occasional surreptitious levitations of themselves. With the passing of the generations these mischievous outbreaks, which to this day still make their appearance from time to time not only amongst the uneducated, gradually changed their external form, as the belief of the spectators ebbed from witchcraft to possession, and from possession to occult forces. Mistress Faith Corbet, the two little modest girls of John Mompesson, Hettie Wesley, Mary Jobson, Angelique Cottin, are all links in the one chain of evolution. The motive in all cases appears to have been the morbid craving for notoriety and excitement on the part of a sickly child; the means employed vary from age to age only with the opportunities offered for deception; the explanations adopted by the sympathetic spectators repeat accurately their individual beliefs and temperament, or the current traditions of the country and the time. In the case of Faith Corbet and the Drummer of Tedworth the effects were ascribed to the malignancy of witchcraft; in the Wesley household, as in most modern outbreaks, the disturbances were supposed to indicate a spirit of doubtful character. Mary Jobson, in the eyes of Dr. Clanny, was the recipient of angelic inspiration; whilst the performances of Angelique Cottin were ascribed in scientific Paris to the operation of electricity.

For generations the two streams of superstition had pursued a parallel course without meeting. The learned had believed in their fluids, the vulgar in their Poltergeists; but whilst the magnetic somnambule had for the most part eschewed physical phenomena, the naughty children had found the seeing of visions and trance-speaking too tame to satisfy their ambitions. With the introduction of Angelique Cottin to the scientific world of Paris the two streams had seemed about to unite; but it was not actually until two or three years later, and in America, that their fusion became an accomplished fact.

In France, the land of its birth, Animal Magnetism had been from the first predominantly naturalistic, though even in France there had been a few men who, following the example of the great Swedish seer, had seen in the trance an open gate to the spiritual world. In 1847 this interpretation received strong support from the trance utterances of Cahagnet's somnambules. In Germany the Spiritualist interpretation had found many and enthusiastic adherents, and a special cult had been founded on the revelations of the so-called Seeress of Prevorst. In England, mainly owing no doubt to the predominant influence of Elliotson and to the

association of the new science with a materialistic phrenolo
the naturalist view had, as in France, with a few unimport
exceptions prevailed.

It was in America, however, where, as in England,
cult of Animal Magnetism had won but tardy recogniti
that the Spiritualist interpretation found its most congei
soil, and attained ultimately its fullest development.
first, indeed, the chief crop consisted of pseudo-scient
theories of fluids and emanations, framed perhaps on m
vigorous lines and with a more conspicuous freedom fi
the trammels of fact than in the older civilisations. But
times were peculiarly favourable to growth in anot
direction. Apart from the conditions inseparable fron
new and rapidly expanding society, with a people of qu
intelligence, but lacking as yet in fixed and recogni
standards of belief and culture, the temperament of
American people appears to have been, at this time at
rate, especially open to the appeal of religious or humi
tarian enthusiasm. In the decade 1840–50 two s
enthusiasms had caught and still held the popular imagi
tion. The doctrine of the Second Advent and the immin
millennium had been preached for some years by Willi
Miller in New York and neighbouring States, and in 184
the date fixed for the Second Coming—his followers w
reckoned to number about fifty thousand. Many of th
lived in the daily and almost hourly expectation of a r
heaven upon earth. In superficial contrast with this pron
of the kingdom of heaven, the scheme of Fourier for
reconstruction of human societies on Socialist lines found
the same time a ready hearing. The Second Adventist,
doubt, found his adherents chiefly amongst the more ignor
members of the community, whilst Brisbane and other
ponents of Fourierism made their appeal, as we have se
to the educated classes. But in whichever guise the app
came, it found its response in the same deep-seated hum
instincts, the dissatisfaction with the shortcomings of
present social state, the perennial expectation of a Gold
Age to come.

The "magnetic clairvoyants" who sprang up in a soci
thus constituted and thus prepared inevitably shared
contagion of the time. They soon forsook neuropath
etherology, and pathetism, to discourse at large of spiritu
influx and social justice, of a new heaven and a new ear
We have seen how in Andrew Jackson Davis these influen
made themselves felt; the Poughkeepsie Seer was essentia

a child of his time. Other temporary circumstances combined to swell the ranks of his disciples and to make his appeal more effective and far-reaching. The Churches whose sympathies were widest and their doctrinal bonds the most lax naturally contributed most to the new movement. In particular the Universalist Church, which had been preoccupied for a generation with questions concerning the nature of the future life and its relations with the present, and was daily losing, through the divisions of opinion on these questions, many of its most earnest members, furnished many recruits to the nascent Spiritualism of Poughkeepsie.

But the movement even so seemed at one time about to suffer euthanasia, as so many kindred movements have done. The concrete promises of an imminent social reconstruction seemed about to prevail over the vaguer and more remote ideals of the clairvoyant and those about him. By the middle of 1849 the control of the *Univercœlum* had already passed from their hands, and that organ was thenceforth devoted to the spreading of the new hope of salvation on mundane lines, by means of co-operation and trades-unions. But, as we have seen in the case of Edward Irving's congregation, expectations of spiritual signs and wonders, if sufficiently definite, are apt to breed their own fulfilment; and the hopes of Davis, Fernald, Harris, and their followers were not destined to remain fruitless. The outbreak, in the spring of 1848, of Poltergeist manifestations of a familiar type in a rural township in New York State, their rapid spread in neighbouring towns, and their reinforcement two years later by similar performances of a more elaborate kind in the house of a Presbyterian minister, gave the necessary impulse. All the vague mystic aspirations and hopes of a coming revelation crystallised round these concrete messages from the Unknown, and by the middle of 1850 we find Modern Spiritualism fairly started on its career, with some half-dozen organs of its own, edited for the most part by those who had gathered round the Seer of Poughkeepsie.

The new gospel appealed to the sympathies of men in diverse ways. To the idly curious, the mere brute appetite for the marvellous, it offered signs and wonders; to those whose curiosity was of a more instructed kind it held out hopes of new developments of science, a science which, starting from the physical, should mount up towards the spiritual; those who looked only for an earthly Utopia were dazzled with the promise of the speedy fulfilment of their dream;

it offered consolation to the mourner; and to all some h
of light on the mystery of the universe. The movem
was thus inspired, in its beginnings, with a genuine ent
siasm which may not unfitly, perhaps, be called religi
With all their imperfections, the early apostles of Spiritual
in America seem to have been for the most part disinteres
Sometimes, as with Spear, Ferguson, Warren Chase, Edmo
and, a little later, Robert Owen in this country, the ent
siasm was of a high type. There was egotism, no do
but the objects of ambition were not of a personal k
The new cult, as represented by its leading spokesmen,
rarely sordid. Even the repulsive extravagances of Tho
Lake Harris had, at the worst, something of idealism.
the limitations of the new gospel betrayed its origin.
epithet "religious," indeed, seems to require some justificat
If the prostration of the heart before the vision of Id
Righteousness, of the intellect before Supreme Intellige
is essential to religion, the movement was so far not religi
Its prophets held their offices as self-constituted seers, by
ordinance of higher powers. The universe for them c
tained no mystery; their vision was limited by the monstr
shadow cast in their own likeness on the void. Their app
in fact, including as it did the proffered solace to berea
affection, was of an almost exclusively mundane charac
They held out the promise, not of new knowledge of spirit
things, as "spiritual" has been interpreted in other religi
movements, but of a practicable and imminent millenni
freed from the fear of death, and continuing, on the g
level, through indefinite generations. Their gospel air
not at raising earth to heaven, but at bringing down hea
to minister to the needs of earth. The grace and beaut
mediæval belief had, of course, long since vanished. Sp
ualists no more than their contemporaries could hope
realise the poet's vision:—

> "With white feet of angels seven
> Her white feet go glimmering,
> And above the deep of heaven,
> Flame on flame and wing on wing."

Probably no body of earnest men and women ever p
sented a more unlovely picture of the hereafter. Yet
spite, or perhaps because of the concreteness of its ide
and the parochial limitations of its chief prophets, the r
ideas had sufficient motive power to overrun the Ameri
continent.

It has not been thought necessary to dwell at length upon the more repellent side of the movement in America, the intrusion, in response to the popular demand for marvels, of the professional charlatan, and the rapid concurrent degradation of the cult. It is more profitable, from the present point of view, to study the growth of the movement in this country. Prior to 1852 the Spiritualist interpretation of the utterances of magnetic somnambules had found here but few and half-hearted supporters. The irruption in the autumn of that year of one or two professional rappers from America, and the concurrent development of table-turning, seem to have acted mainly by stimulating the students of the trance to fresh investigations, and by making known the phenomena of automatism to a wider circle. It was on the manifestations of trance-speaking, automatic writing, and similar manifestations in private households, not on the fraudulent phenomena of the professional medium, that the new faith for some years almost wholly depended in this country. With the return of Home from the Continent in 1859, and the invasion of other American mediums during the next few years, English Spiritualism entered on a process of popularisation and debasement similar to that which it had undergone in the land of its birth. In this country, however, the process was of much more gradual development. Professional mediumship itself was of slow growth here; it was not until towards the end of the decade 1860–70 that English men or women, with one or two exceptions, were found to rival the feats of Home, Foster, and the Davenports. And it is noticeable that some of those who were first in the field were young girls, in whose case it is easier to take the charitable view that the deception had its origin in abnormal conditions of physique and temperament.

Private mediumship—the production of spurious marvels for other motives than those of direct pecuniary gain—formed for some years the distinguishing characteristic of English Spiritualism. Again, the genuinely religious interest of Howitt, Shorter, Mrs. de Morgan, and the Wilkinsons, on the one hand, the scientific attainments, on the other, of men like Varley, Crookes, and Wallace, who thought the matter worthy their serious study, tended to keep things at a comparatively high level of thought and feeling. The cult, indeed, in this country has never attained to such dimensions as a popular movement, nor sunk to quite so low a level of fatuity and imposture as the latter-day American Spiritualism. This result is no doubt partly due

to the legal restrictions which have operated here to h
the exploitation of the credulous, partly, no doubt, t
influence of the Press, and generally to the differen
social conditions, and to the fact that there have a
been found in this country persons of credit and serio
to take an interest in the subject.

But from 1870 onwards various causes have tend
lower the general character of the movement. First am
these, no doubt, is to be reckoned the growth of
fessionalism, and concurrently the increasing frequen
public exposures. But the death or retirement of its e
champions had much to do with this result. The little
of men and women who assisted at the incubati
Spiritualism from 1855 onwards gradually died or lost
active interest in the matter, and in its later a
Spiritualism had for some years ceased to attract m
like mind to replace them.

If we turn now to the evidence, we find that it i
primarily on the discredited physical phenomena, of
enough has been already said in previous chapters, tha
belief in spirit influence or occult force is founded, b
manifestations of another order, of which these feats of l
demain form an incidental and dubious accompani
Ecstasy, possession, somnambulism, the magnetic, mes
istic, or hypnotic trance are conditions exhibiting ce
common characteristics, the most marked being that
subject loses, more or less completely, control over his ac
and consciousness of his identity. When the hand acts
out the knowledge of the owner, when the mouth sp
words foreign to the thoughts and character of the speake
inference, in an age of faith, is inevitable that the utte
and the action are to be attributed to alien spiritual po
The nature of the influence, whether diabolic or divine,
supposed to act through the intermediary of the ecs
reflects accurately current traditions and beliefs. Ne
children and hysterical nuns have been possessed, alil
their own belief and in that of the spectators, by the
and his angels; the proscribed peasants of the Cevenne
the members of Irving's congregation were sustaine
times of tribulation by the fancied visitation of a d
afflatus. With the philosophic Dr. Dee the spirits, thems
of ambiguous habitation, held discourse neither of he
nor hell, but of the primæval language, of magic, and
mystic relations of numbers. In eighteenth-century I
when spirits were no longer fashionable, the somnamb

visions were all of fluidic emanations, and her revelations were concerned with the subtle interaction of animate and inanimate bodies.

Modern psychology has learnt something of the nature of these departures from normal consciousness, and has found their analogues, on the one hand, in reverie, sleep, and automatism; on the other, in delirium, hysteria, and other morbid conditions. Further, it has explained and justified the belief in an alien influence held by the patient himself and those around him. For together with the division or restriction of consciousness, which is the common characteristic of these states, there is, as we have already seen, a concomitant alteration of the physical basis of consciousness. Even in automatic writing the automatist is frequently unconscious of the movement of his hand, and, learning what has been written in the same manner and at the same time as the other spectators, by the eye alone, he tends to regard the movements of his hand as extra-personal. In cases of trance and other states where the division of consciousness is more complete, the corresponding physiological changes are unquestionably more far-reaching. Probably, as Ribot has suggested, there is some alteration in that complex of organic sensibilities, on which the feeling of personal identity may be presumed largely to depend. The subject is conscious that he is no longer the same man. A good illustration of the manner in which a change in these obscure sensations may suggest a change of personality is afforded by Mr. Hill Tout's experience, quoted above.[1] His assumption of the rôle of his dying father appears to have been primarily inspired by his own feelings of physical weakness and depression. Again, in spontaneous trance or in deep hypnosis we constantly find that the subject refers to his waking self in the third person. He feels himself another man, and naturally assumes another name.

In these obscure physiological changes, then, aided by suggestion, which is rarely lacking, from the spectators,[2] is to be found a sufficient explanation of the constant assumption by the entranced subject of alien personalities, and of the claim put forward on his behalf for external inspiration. The mere fact of the claim being made, and made obviously in good faith, is no evidence for its authenticity.

[1] Page 303.

[2] The question "Who are you?" commonly addressed to the performing table or planchette is obviously well calculated to call spirits from the vasty deep. See Professor Patrick's remarks upon this point in his article on "Peculiarities of the Secondary Personality" (*Psychological Review*, New York, Nov., 1898).

Nor, again, does the realistic character of the impers tion and its fidelity to the facts in itself furnish any b guarantee of the claim. The hypnotised subject will in manner, at a hint from the operator, assume any req rôle and carry it out with dramatic power and consist The impersonation by Mademoiselle Hélène Smit Marie Antoinette and Simandini, or by Mrs. Piper o French physician Phinuit, are instances of the extraordi coherence and lifelike quality which these trance crea may assume in capable hands.[1]

The proof that the intelligence which speaks to us thr the mouth of the apparently unconscious medium is, in the particular spirit which he professes to be is more more clearly seen to depend less on the evidence afforde dramatic personation or imitations of gesture, intonat and other external characteristics, than on similarit mental content. Nor is even here a superficial resembl sufficient to justify the presumption of identity. If entranced medium speaks to me with the voice of my friend, uses his characteristic gestures and phrases, or re duces his handwriting, we may be dealing merely wi pseudo-personality created by the subliminal fantasy of medium. If the "control" converses with me on subj known only to myself and my friend, there is still possibility that the knowledge displayed may have derived, by whatever process of transmission, from my mind. It is only if information should be furnished matters familiar to the dead but unknown to the med her interlocutor, or any living mind, that we are enti to look for the explanation elsewhere.

Whether any tests of the kind could suffice to prove existence of discarnate spirits; and, again, whether in of the unknown and unimaginable possibilities of decep in that presumed other world, any conceivable proo personal identity should suffice, has been questioned competent authorities.[2] But scepticism on the first

[1] See Dr. Hodgson's account (*Proc. S. P. R.*, vol. viii. p. 50) of the g of "Phinuit" and his own abortive researches into that eminent physi earthly career. Dr. Hodgson has, I understand, of late years modified his as to the exact nature of the Phinuit personality; but it seems hardly op doubt that it is a creation and not a reincarnation.

[2] As regards the first contention, take, for instance, the following p from Münsterberg: "The question is . . . whether departed spirits ente communication with living men by mediums and by incarnation. The sc does not admit a compromise; with regard to this he flatly denies the possi . . . the facts as they are claimed do not exist, and never will exist" (*Psyc*

exhibits, perhaps, some confusion of thought, on the second something of pedantry. Proof of the existence of other minds outside our own, even in this world, is hardly capable of expression in logical formulæ; and proof of the existence of spirits, discarnate but not necessarily divorced from all material embodiment, might conceivably be obtained, of like quality, which should be sufficient to produce practical conviction. And if there are spirits at all, to trust them on the same terms as we trust our fellow-mortals would be our most prudent as it would be our only practicable policy.

The old foundations of the Spiritualist belief, then, have been undermined by recent additions to our knowledge. But just as the faith might have seemed to be tottering to its final fall, it has been buttressed anew out of its ruins, and now stands to the eye more firmly established than before. In so far as this added support is derived from the laborious investigations of Dr. Hodgson and his colleagues on the trance revelations of Mrs. Piper, Mrs. Thompson, and other clairvoyant mediums, the final result will no doubt depend on the manner in which the trance personalities meet the test already indicated. If in the course of the next two or three decades attempts to obtain information which is outside the knowledge of any terrestrial intelligence meet with as little success as they have met with up to the present time, it will seem a reasonable conclusion that the *soi-disant* spirits are only, in the last analysis, creatures of the medium's imagination. If the test is satisfied, a notable advance will have been made in the direction of proving personal immortality.

But an argument of another kind has assumed prominence of recent years. The remarkable speculations of the late Frederic Myers have gone far to vindicate, on new lines, the Spiritualist contention, and to bring it once more as an open question before the court of science. The special interest of his theory lies in its assimilation of those latest results of experimental psychology, which on a superficial consideration might seem fatal to the claims of Spiritualism. To offer an adequate summary of Mr. Myers' views within the present limits of space would be impracticable,[1] but briefly and baldly stated his position is that recent investigations demonstrate, below the superficial consciousness which

and Life, pp. 252, 253). On the second point see F. H. Bradley, in the *Fortnightly Review* for December, 1885, on "The Evidences of Spiritualism."

[1] The reader is referred for a fuller exposition of the theory to Mr. Myers' forthcoming work, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death.*

commonly passes for the whole personality of the m
the existence of a huge psychic organism, as yet imperfec
expressed in terms either of action or thought. To ad
his own simile, our work-a-day consciousness may be co
pared to the visible spectrum: it is but a fraction, and
seemingly accidental fraction, of a larger whole. Of
invisible portion of this psychic spectrum orthodox psyc
logy recognises only one, and that the inferior, moiety.
to choose what is perhaps a more exact simile, consciousn
is regarded by psychologists as fulfilling in the body corpo
functions similar to those discharged by a newspaper in
body politic. Each represents in highly condensed fo
the multifarious operations of the organism. And alike
both the share of representation accorded to any particu
activity is determined by its need rather than by its intrin
importance. Foreign relations, the reaction on an ev
changing environment, the acquisition of new knowled
the cultivation of new modes of action, and interests
more ephemeral than these, fill the columns of the newspa
as they occupy the field of our waking thoughts. But al
in the individual and in the public consciousness, the activi
on which the whole complex mechanism depend, the labo
of unnumbered millions in the vast organisation of indust
the ceaseless movements of blood and lymph, the ceasel
growth and change of tissue, all the things which are
deeply knit up with the essential fabric to need contin
supervision and direction, go on for the most part unrecord
But if in times of popular disturbance the editor shou
temporarily abdicate his functions, or if the man fall in
sleep or trance, these subterranean activities may at on
become articulate. Mr. Myers, accepting so far the ordina
psychological view that sleep and trance introduce us
a more primitive state of consciousness, and bring us nea
to the merely organic life which we share with the sava
and the brute, holds that in these lapses from waking co
sciousness we may also gain glimpses of faculties as y
unexercised and unbreathed, the mere existence of whi
is proof that man is called to nobler destinies and equipped f
a larger stage than this material life can furnish. Only in the
conditions of partial psychic dissolution, or on rare occasio
of stress and danger, when the ordinary machinery of t
organism is unequal to its task, do these hidden faculti
make their power and presence felt. As if behind t
editorial chair there should stand a more august presen
content for the most part to delegate its office, but ab

when the need is urgent, to voice and direct a nation's policy.

Now the strength of the position here presented lies in this, that it makes the ordinary Spiritualist argument superfluous. Mr. Myers does not, indeed, reject that argument. Whilst admitting that many, perhaps most, of the trance personalities are but dream-figures, created out of the subject's own fantasy, he finds in certain cases proof of communion with spirits of the dead. But if his main contention is well-founded, Spiritualists can afford to dispense with these dubious revelations. Whether or not the conditions of another world permit its denizens to hold halting communication with those here is a question of slight and transitory import, if we have it in our power to demonstrate, from its own inherent properties, that the life of the soul is not bound up with the life of the body. If in states of trance or ecstasy the soul has knowledge of things distant and things hidden, can foretell the future and read the past as an open book, it seems a lawful inference that, as such faculties have assuredly not been acquired in the process of terrestrial evolution, and find but little employment or justification here, they must testify to a world of higher uses, and an evolution not conditioned by our material environment. In a word, such faculties must be regarded not as vestigial, but as rudimentary; a promise for the future, not an idle inheritance from the past.

It is important to note that the theory here baldly outlined is not a mere philosophical speculation founded on assumptions which are incapable of verification, but a scientific hypothesis, based on the interpretation of certain alleged facts. As such, we have to consider not merely the validity of the inference, but the authenticity of the facts. It is from this quarter that Mr. Myers' position is most assailable. That, if prevision, retrocognition, clairvoyance, and other transcendent faculties can be proved to inhere in the soul, the soul's independence of the body is made manifest, need not perhaps be disputed. But the evidence seems at present far from sufficient to establish, hardly sufficient perhaps to justify the speculation.

Taken altogether, the evidence for clairvoyance, prevision, and the other supramundane faculties postulated by the theory falls far short, alike in bulk and in quality, of the evidence for telepathy. And that evidence, as we know, is in common estimation held as insufficient. Even if the operation of telepathy should be as clearly demonstrated,

say, as that of the cathode rays, it does not follow that transcendental position would be strengthened by demonstration. The little band of investigators—amo them Mr. Myers himself—who are mainly responsible for hypothesis of telepathy have, wisely perhaps, refrained f committing themselves to any theory of its mode of act That mind should affect mind (so runs their cautious st ment of the problem) in a new mode may mean no m than that brain can act upon brain by means of ethe vibrations hitherto unsuspected. The power itself may but a last relic of our discarded inheritance from the p a long-disused faculty dragged from the dim lumber-r of a primitive consciousness, and galvanised into a bel and halting activity.

In fine, the first question is not what new agencies may inferred from the facts, but whether the facts justify inference of any new agency at all. We have tra throughout the history of recent mysticism, from sixteenth century onwards, the prevalence of a belief some power of divining the unspoken thoughts of o minds, of exercising influence by the unspoken will, discerning things extraneous to the scope of the ordin senses. The mere existence, however, of a belief in s powers, prevalent throughout the civilised world, persist from generation to generation, and supported by an e increasing volume of testimony, raises but a faint presur tion that the belief is well-founded. We learn from whole history of witchcraft and kindred superstitions, a from the extraordinary persistence down to our own d and amongst persons of some scientific attainments, of belief in fluidic emanations from magnets, crystals, dru and other substances, that belief in such agencies is apt such material to breed its own justification.

Moreover, the case is weakened by the observation t the psychological facts, upon which the belief is based, h been accompanied, sporadically at first, but of late ye with increasing frequency, by facts of another kind, obviou explicable as due to trickery or other familiar causes; a that both sets of facts have for the most part met with eq credence from contemporary witnesses. The question, the fore, is reduced to one of evidence. The task before us the patient analysis of the existing evidence, and the attem preferably by direct experiment, to acquire new evide on the subject. As regards the historical testimony to transmission of thought and clairvoyance, I have alrea

recorded my personal conviction that it amounts to very little. I have thought it expedient to devote some space to its recital and analysis, because it forms a necessary element in the problem; but, owing to the defectiveness of the records and the ignorance, on the part of the earlier observers, of now recognised sources of error, we can have little assurance of its value. It is only because of the accumulation, in recent years, both by observation and by direct experiment, of facts pointing in the same direction, that we can feel justified in regarding the matter as an open question; and the recent evidence loses perhaps more than it gains by juxtaposition with the historical records. Mrs. Piper would be a much more convincing apparition if she could have come to us out of the blue, instead of trailing behind her a nebulous ancestry of magnetic somnambules, witchridden children, and ecstatic nuns.

But the study of the past furnishes us with an equally emphatic warning against an error of an opposite character. There is a superstition of incredulity; and the memory of that discreditable episode in the history of science in these islands, the contemptuous rejection for nearly two generations of the accumulating evidence for hypnotic anæsthesia and kindred phenomena, should suffice to teach us that even the extravagances of mysticism may contain a residuum of unacknowledged and serviceable fact. We must not, for the second time, throw away the baby with the water from the bath.

THE END

INDEX

"Achille," case of, described by Professor Janet, ii. 309–10
Action at distance, i. 56, 57, 69, 98, 117, 135
Adare, Lord (third Earl of Dunraven), i. 141, 146; ii. 229
Adare, Lord (fourth Earl of Dunraven), ii. 230, 241, 255–9, 263, 268
Adèle Maginot, i. 83 *seq.*; ii. 340, 342
Aksakof, ii. 162
Alchemists, i. 5, 44–8; ii. 348
Alexander, P. P., ii. 230
All the Year Round on Spiritualism, ii. 48
Allochiry as symptom of hysteria, ii. 320
American mediums visit England, ii. 26, 27, 47 *seq.*
American Spiritualism contrasted with English, ii. 43–5
Anæsthesia, mesmeric, first observed, i. 71; rejected by English medical men, i. 124–7; hysterical, ii. 294. *See* also insensibility to pain
Andrews, Mrs., her materialisation séances, ii. 96, 114
Animal Magnetism. *See* Magnetism
Animal Electricity, i. 63–4
Animal Heat, de Jussieu's views on, i. 57
"Annie," her trance discourses, ii. 32
Antichrist and table-turning, ii. 13 *seq.*
Apologetics, Spiritualist, i. 200, 285; ii. 61–2
"Apports," i. 81, 284; ii. 28, 66–7; through mediumship of S. Moses, ii. 278; with "Hélène Smith," ii. 321; a case of, described by Janet, ii. 324–5
Arabic written by "Hélène Smith," ii. 316–17
Arago on Angelique Cottin, i. 42
Arnold, Sir Edwin, on Davenport Brothers, ii. 59
Ashburner, Dr., i. 127, 131, 141, 302; ii. 55; his account of a séance with Mrs. Hayden, ii. 16, 18
Ashtabula Poltergeist, i. 241–2
Atkinson, H. G., i. 129, 131; ii. 147, 171
Auburn, N.Y., i. 182, 204, 295
Aura, spiritual, ii. 39, 71, 78
Automatic record, evasion of, by spirit mediums, ii. 183–5
Automatic writing and speaking, i. 257 *seq.*, 264–82; ii. 35, 72–4, 126–39
Automatism, ii. 289 *seq.*; sensory, ii. 294–9; motor, ii. 300–6
Automatism, its dangers, ii. 328

Bacon, spirit of, i. 271
Bailly, i. 54, 59
Ballou, Adin, i. 210, 218 *seq.*, 233, 292, 302
Baquet, i. 54, 111
Baraduc, his belief in fluids, i. 48, 68
Barkas, T. P., on Foster, ii. 55; on clairvoyance of Madame Espérance, ii. 128 *seq.*
Barlee, T. D., his account of a sitting with Home, ii. 234–6
Barrett, Professor W. F., ii. 89, 292, 332; on a spirit photograph, ii. 124; his paper before British Association, ii. 159–60; founder of S.P.R., ii. 176 *seq.*; on hallucination as explanation of physical phenomena, ii. 244
Bastian, exposure of, ii. 107
Bastie, Dejean de la, his séance with Adèle, i. 84–5
Baxter, Robert, on the Irvingite "tongues," i. 8
Beach on Stratford Poltergeist, i. 197, 199
Bealings Bells, i. 29–30, 41
Beard, Dr., on a case of hallucination, ii. 252
Beardslee, Lemuel J., his confession, i. 188, 190
Beattie, his spirit photographs, ii. 118, 123
Beecher, Rev. C., on Spiritualism, i. 291, 301

Collier, John Payne, ii. 287
Collingwood, Mr. J. F., on Miss Wood's materialisations, ii. 112
Collyer, Dr., i. 129, 154
Colquhoun, J. C., i. 113
Commission of 1784 on Animal Magnetism, i. 54 *seq.*; of 1831, i. 72–5
Community of sensation, i. 123–4, 132–40; ii. 329
Confessions of witches, i. 16–18; of trickery by bewitched persons, i. 23; by mediums, i. 185–8; ii. 273–4
Conflict of consciousness, ii. 305
Conjurers unable to explain mediumistic performances, ii. 104–5
Conjuring tricks, difficulty of accurately describing, ii. 210
Consciousness, dissociation of, ii. 294; in crystal vision, ii. 297–8; physical symptoms of, ii. 307 *seq.*, 320
Consciousness, conflict of, in hypnotism, ii. 305, 355; subliminal, Mr. Myers' views on, ii. 357–9
Contagion of mediumship, ii. 75–6
Continuous observation, difficulty of maintaining, ii. 195, 201 *seq.*, 208, 210 *seq.*, 221
Convulsionaries of St. Medard, fire ordeal amongst, ii. 264
Conway, Moncure, on hand-holding, ii. 200
Cook, Miss Florence, ii. 76, 78, 97–9; exposure of, ii. 103; her sittings for Sir W. Crookes, ii. 152–5
Cooper, Robert, ii. 60, 66
Cooper, Fenimore, at a séance, i. 191
Corbet, Mistress Faith, i. 21–2; ii. 349
Corner, Mrs. *See* Miss Florence Cook
Cornhill Magazine, account of séance with Home, ii. 48–50
Costello, Dr., his testimony to Alexis, i. 147
Cottin, Angelique, i. 41–3; ii. 349
Courtney, W. S., i. 300, 302
Cox, Serjeant, ii. 87, 104, 115, 147, 150, 170, 237; on Morse's trance-speaking, ii. 133; his theories on psychic force, ii. 173–4
Cox, William, and Home, ii. 142–4, 225.
Cracking of joints, as explaining raps, i. 184 *seq.*
Crawford, Earl of. *See* Lindsay.
Crisis, magnetic, i. 54, 58, 65
Crookes, Sir W., i. 234; ii. 140, 152–9, 226, 236; his experiments with Miss Cook, ii. 152–5; his experiments with Miss Fay, ii. 157–9; on rules to be observed in investigation, ii. 183; his experiments with Home, ii. 237–43; on Home's levitations, ii. 254–5; on fire ordeal with Home, ii. 262–3
Crosland, Mrs., her experiences, ii. 37–9
Crystal, faces shown in, by medium, ii. 249–50
Crystal-seeing, i. 12–14; ii. 69, 70, 268, 294–9; not injurious, ii. 327
Culver, Mrs. Norman, her confession, i. 185 *seq.*, 190

"Dan," Jacob Dixon's medium, ii. 29–30
Dancing epidemic, i. 257, 281
Dark séances, i. 227; ii. 79–80, 195 *seq.*; hallucinations at, ii. 249–50, 299
Davenport Brothers, i. 208; ii. 55–61
Davenport, Miss Nella, author's experience with, ii. 85
Davey, S. J., his imitations of spirit slate-writing, ii. 209, 216 *seq.*; his experiences with Eglinton, ii. 212; his use of threads in conjuring, ii. 241–2
David, alleged communications from, ii. 33–4
Davis, Andrew Jackson, i. 158–76, 204, 223, 292, 294; ii. 3, 166, 172, 350–1; on Stratford Poltergeist, i. 196–200; his inspired speaking, i. 265; on the "new motor," i. 298; his attitude to Christianity, i. 299
Davis, Mary, i. 293
Dawson, Ellen, her clairvoyance, i. 148
Day-dreaming as explanation of mediumship, ii. 309, 312 *seq.*
Day, Horace, on Stratford Poltergeist, i. 199
Dee, Dr., i. 12–14; ii. 348, 354
De Gasparin, Count, ii. 161, 187–8
De Guldenstubbé, ii. 66; his experiments in "direct" writing, ii. 188–90
De Jussieu, his report on Animal Magnetism, i. 56–9
Deleuze, i. 64–6, 79, and Billot, i. 79–81
De Morgan, Mrs., ii. 30, 36, 45, 71, 144
De Morgan, Professor, his testimony to clairvoyance, i. 148–50, 189; ii. 182; on the raps, ii. 6; his preface to *From Matter to Spirit*, ii. 141, 144
De Rochas, ii. 178, 271
D'Eslon, i. 52, 54, 112
Devils, belief in, i. 3, 4, 11, 50, 79
Dexter, Dr., i. 225; his automatic writing, i. 266; and Edmonds, their book on Spiritualism, i. 271
Diabolism, ii. 168
Diagnosis of diseases by somnambules, i. 61, 63, 92
Dialectical Society, ii. 68, 127, 147 *seq.*, 258–9

Herschell, Dr. George, on Eglinton's slate-writing, ii. 205
Herschel, Sir John, a case of hallucination, ii. 251
Hewitt, S. C., i. 298 *seq.*
Hiatt, T. S., on Mountain Cove Community, i. 296
Hieroglyphs, spiritual, i. 195, 197
Hindustani, spoken by "Hélène Smith," ii. 316–17
Hoax played on Sunderland, i. 205
Hockley, F., ii. 31, 174
Hodgson, Dr. R., ii. 176, 178, 205, 292; on Eusapia Paladino, ii. 201–3; his investigations in slate-writing, ii. 209 *seq.*; his account of an Indian juggling trick, ii. 210; on fallacies of memory, ii. 212, 235; on Mrs. Piper, ii. 332, 340 *seq.*, 357
"Hoffmann, Professor," on Eglinton's slate-writing, ii. 207, 212
Holland, Dr. Henry, i. 112
Holloway, i. 112
Home, D. D., i. 242, 244, 248, 285, 286, 307; ii. 24, 47, 95, 271, 275, 326, 336, 353; Robert Bell's séance with, ii. 48–50; séance with Brewster and Brougham, ii. 142–4; trial of Lyon *v.*, ii. 145, 256; before Dialectical Society, ii. 149; biographical sketch, ii. 224–6; parentage, ii. 224; conversion to Roman Catholicism, ii. 227; alleged outrages on, ii. 227; personal description of, ii. 227–8; his clairvoyance, ii. 230; never detected in fraud, ii. 230; physical phenomena, ii. 231 *seq.*; his table-tilting, i. 243; ii. 241, 244–5; hallucinations seen at his séances, ii. 70, 250, 252, 268; his levitations, i. 244–5; ii. 253–8; his fire-ordeal, ii. 262–3
Honywood, Mrs., ii. 263
Hopedale Community, i. 166, 210, 220
Hopkins, Matthew, the witch-finder, i. 19
Hopps, Rev. Page, ii. 165
Houdin, Robert, his testimony to clairvoyance of Alexis, i. 143
Houghton, Miss, ii. 72–5
Howitt, William, i. 40; ii. 55, 91, 139, 163, 169; on Buguet's trial, ii. 123
Hudson, spirit photographer, ii. 118–20
Huggins, Sir W., ii. 237 *seq.*
Hughes, F. S., ii. 92
Hughlings-Jackson, Dr., ii. 300
Human Nature, ii. 164 *seq.*
Human spirits, belief in, i. 15
Hume, D. D. *See* Home.
Hutchinson on witchcraft, i. 22
Hutton, Richard, ii. 90, 177
Huxley, Professor, his reply to Dialectical Society, ii. 148
Hydesville, i. 179
Hyperæsthesia, i. 133, 137, 143; ii. 330
Hyslop, Professor, on crystal-seeing: ii. 295, 297, 298; on Mrs. Piper, ii. 337, 345
Hysteria, as safety valve, ii. 312–13; its analogies with mediumship, ii. 323 *seq.*
Hysterical fits of bewitched persons, i. 22–4; ii. 290; of Mary Jobson, i. 30–2

Imagination, influence of, i. 119–20; 157–8
"Imperator," alleged control of W. S. Moses, ii. 283 *seq.*
Indian tongues spoken in trance, i. 4, 257 *seq.*
Induced trance first observed, i. 56, 60; characteristics of, ii. 294, 354
Inhibition, ii. 293–4, 299 *seq.*
Insanity induced by Spiritualism, i. 304
Insensibility to pain in ecstasy, i. 5, 7; in magnetic trance, i. 71, 124–7; discredited by medical men, i. 125–7; Dr. Marshall Hall on, i. 126–7
Insensitive patches as witch marks, i. 20
Inspirational speaking, i. 216, 264 *seq.*, 279–80; ii. 134 *seq.*; writing, i. 172–4, 279–80; ii. 130 *seq.*, 301
Irving, Edward, i. 7–11, 109; ii. 354
Isham, Sir Charles, ii. 16, 169

Jackson, J. W., i. 131; ii. 12, 171
Jago, Mr., experiments of, i. 138–9
James, Henry, i. 210, 291, 302
James, Professor William, ii. 304, 308; on Mrs. Piper, ii. 333, 336
Jane, Mrs. de Morgan's servant, ii. 30, 36
Janet, Professor Pierre, ii. 245, 292, 294, 295, 297, 307; on two cases of "possession," ii. 309–12; on day-dreaming, ii. 311–12; on allochiry, ii. 320; on a case of "apports," ii. 324–5
Jastrow, Professor, ii. 292, 300; his experiments in motor-automatism, ii. 301
"Jeffery," the Wesley Poltergeist, i. 32–9
Jencken, H. D., ii. 258, 263, 268
Jencken, Mrs. (Catherine Fox), ii. 79, 83, 169; her confession, i. 188
Jobson, Mary, i. 30–2; ii. 349
Johnson, Miss Alice, ii. 292
Jones, J. Enmore, ii. 29, 44, 75, 118, 169, 233, 254

Josty, spirit photographer, ii. 224
Jung-Stilling, i. 94, 95, 97; his propositions, i. 96, 109
Jupiter's "spiritual spheres," i. 301

Kane, Mrs. (Margaretta Fox), ii. 194; her confession, i. 188
"Kardec, Allan," ii. 161, 166, 168
"Katie," photographs of, by Sir William Crookes, ii. 153–4
Keeler, Pierre, ii. 194–5
Keighley, Spiritualist manifestations at, ii. 19, 162, 164
Kellar, Harry, on Eglinton's slate-writing, ii. 205
Kelly, Edward, i. 12–14
Kenealy, Dr., ii. 167
Kerner, Justinus, i. 99–109
Keulemans, Mr., his induced hallucinations, ii. 298
Kiantone Community, i. 292
Kieser, i. 93, 95, 98
"King, John," i. 248; ii. 81, 99, 100, 106, 111
Kingsford, Dr. Anna, ii. 176
Kislingbury, Miss, ii. 108
Kleptomania, ii. 323
Kluge, i. 92–94, 95
Koch, Dr. Charles, on table-turning, ii. 11
Koons' spirit-room, i. 246 *seq.*, 286

La Fontaine, i. 114–15, 128
Lancet, the, on Mesmerism, i. 114–15, 124, 127
Lang, Andrew, i. 27; on Home, ii. 228; on fire-ordeal, ii. 264, 266; on crystal-gazing, ii. 295, 298, 327
Langley, Professor, on fire-ordeal in Tahiti, ii. 265
Lankester, Professor Ray, on Slade, ii. 89 *seq.*
Latin spoken or written in trance, i. 5, 7, 9, 257, 262; ii. 19, 189
Lavoisier, i. 54, 62
Lay, Wilfrid, on mental imagery, ii. 295
Laycock, T., clairvoyant subject, i. 142
Leaf, Dr. Walter, on Mrs. Piper, ii. 336
"Le Baron," Mr., his mediumistic experiences, ii. 304–5
Le Bon, a case of hallucination; ii. 252; on collective hallucinations, ii. 267
Legislation against mediums, i. 305
Lehmann, his criticism of Sir William Crookes' experiments, ii. 241
Levitation, in witchcraft, i. 23; at Stratford (Conn.), i. 196; at Spiritualist séances, i. 243–6; ii. 28, 49, 67; of Home, i. 244–5; ii. 253–8; of W. S. Moses, ii. 278
Lewes, G. H., ii. 5, 147
Lewis, Professor Carvill, on Eglinton's slate-writing, ii. 206, 215
Liébeault, i. 131
Light, the Spiritualist newspaper, ii. 177–8
Lights at Moses' séances, ii. 279
Lincoln, Abraham, i. 225
Lindsay, Master of (Earl of Crawford), ii. 151, 263, 268; on Home's levitations, ii. 255–8; on Home's elongation, ii. 258–9
Linton, Charles, his inspirational writings, i. 272 *seq.*
"Little Georgia Magnet," i. 43
Livermore, Mr., his séances with Kate Fox, ii. 95–6
Llewellyn, Colonel, his testimony to Alexis' clairvoyance, i. 146
Lodge, Sir Oliver, on the "Little Georgia Magnet," i. 43; on Eusapia Paladino; ii. 199 *seq.*; on Mrs. Piper, ii. 336
Lombroso, Professor, ii. 198
London Medical and Chirurgical Society, its attitude to Mesmerism, i. 126–7
London Spiritualist Alliance, ii. 276
Longdon, Mary, i. 23
Loomis, Professor, ii. 55
Loudun, epidemic possession at, i. 4–5
Loutherbourg, i. 112
Lowenthal, Mr., on his motor impulses, ii. 74
Lucas, his séance with Adèle, i. 88–9
Luys, Dr., i. 48, 68
Lyon, Mrs., ii. 225–6
Lyon *v.* Home, trial of, ii. 145
Lyric of the Morning Land, i. 277–8
Lytton, Sir E. Bulwer, ii. 225

Mackenzie, Kenneth, ii. 24
Macleod, Dr., ii. 55, 66, 69, 164
Magnet, as used by the alchemists, i. 44–5; supposed influence, on somnambules, i. 41, 92, 117–19; ii. 330
Magnetic fluid, Mesmer's views, i. 51–2; visible to somnambules, i. 61–2, 65, 92; ii. 290; identified with "dephlogisticated air," i. 62; regarded as a physical agent, i. 62, 65, 113–15, 116–19, 154–6
Magnetism, Animal, ii. 10 *seq.*, 161; its discovery, i. 51; as precursor of Spiritualism, ii. 348
Mahan, Rev. Asa, i. 190, 192, 194, 203, 249
Mahan, J. T., his clairvoyant revelations, i. 175
Mainauduc, de, i. 112

Ochorowicz, ii. 178; and Eusapia Paladino, ii. 199 *seq.*
Odyle, i. 118–19, 203, 242, 287, 306; ii. 16; as explanation of table-turning, ii. 10. 171–2
Okeys, the, i. 113–15, 124–5, 132, 134
Olcott, Colonel, ii. 175
Oneida Community, i. 166, 292
O'Sullivan, Hon. J. L., his séances with Firman, ii. 106
Owen, Robert, i. 209; ii. 18, 22, 30–2, 225, 351
Owen, R. Dale, his séances with Mrs. Underhill, ii. 95
Owen, Samuel, American lecturer, ii. 26

Page, Professor, his experiments, i. 193, 288
Painting in trance, i. 280–1; ii. 130
Paladino, Eusapia, i. 42, 286; ii. 80, 178, 198–203
Paracelsus, i. 3, 14, 44–8, 275; his doctrine of signatures, i. 45
Paris, Deacon, i. 6
Parish, on dissociation of consciousness, ii. 298
Partridge, Charles, i. 232, 242, 248
Pathetism, i. 157, 173, 288
Percival, F. W., ii. 276
Perdicaris, Ion, ii. 226, 228, 230, 245, 258
Perkins' metallic tractors, i. 112
Personality, secondary, ii. 308 *seq.*, 323 *seq.*; physical basis of, ii. 355; of Mrs. Piper, ii. 343 *seq.*
Perty, Maximilian, ii. 162
Peters, alleged elongation of, ii. 259–61
Pététin, i. 63–4, 66; ii. 330
Phelps, Rev. Dr., i. 194 *seq.*, 203
Phelps, Professor Austin, i. 196
"Phinuit, Dr.," Mrs. Piper's control, ii. 333, 356
Photographs, spirit, ii. 117 *seq.*
Phreno-Magnet, the, i. 116, 128–30, 154
Phreno-Mesmerism, i. 121–3, 128–30, 154–7; ii. 330; Braid's experiments in, i. 122, 133
Physical phenomena, i. 14; in witchcraft, i. 23; ii. 348–9; in Poltergeist cases and electric girls, i. 25–43; in somnambulism, i. 80, 81, 102–6; in America, i. 283 *seq.*; comparatively recent, ii. 182; postulate several new modes of energy, ii. 183–6; general defects in evidence for, ii. 183–5; of "Hélène Smith," ii. 321; in private mediumship, ii. 63 *seq.*, 291–2
Pigeaire, Mdlle., i. 142
Pilgrimage of Thomas Paine, i. 269 *seq.*
Piper, Mrs., her trance utterances, i. 284; ii. 178, 327, 329 *seq.*; 357, 361; history of her mediumship, ii. 332–3
Plagiarism charged against A. J. Davis, i. 166–8; in inspirational writing, i. 279
Podmore, Austin, his séance with Davey, ii. 217
Poetry, inspirational, i. 277–80; ii. 138–9
Points de repère in crystal vision, ii. 297
Poltergeists, i. 25–43, 288; ii. 244, 290; a legacy from witchcraft, i. 25; investigations of S. P. R., i. 40; as precursor of Spiritualism, ii. 349, 351
Poltergeist children, ii. 323
Possession, divine, i. 5, 7; Professor Janet on two modern cases, ii. 309–12
Post-hypnotic suggestion, ii. 323 *seq.*
Poughkeepsie Seer. *See* Davis, A. J.
Prediction in somnambulism, i. 61, 66, 73
Prescott, Miss, i. 112
Press, attitude of American, towards Spiritualism, i. 290
Priestley, Joseph, and the Wesley letters, i. 32; and phlogiston, i. 62
Primitive language, i. 13–14, 108–9, 262
Prince, Dr. Morton, on crystal-seeing, ii. 295, 298
Private mediumship, ii. 63–77, 91–4, 272, 291–2, 323 *seq.*, 353
"Progressive Spiritualists," Convention of, ii. 164
Psychic body, i. 95, 107; ii. 173–4
Psychic force, ii. 174
Psychical Research, Society for, ii. 178, 182, 276, 290, 337; on Poltergeists, i. 40; on clairvoyance, i. 74, 142; on thought-transference, i. 94; ii. 332; on Theosophy, ii. 176; founding of, ii. 177; on slate-writing, ii. 206 *seq.*; on census of hallucinations, ii. 247, 251
Psychological Society, the, ii. 170
Putnam, Allen, i. 280
Puységur, i. 54, 57, 58, 60–2, 66, 112, 132

Randolph, P. B., American medium, ii. 23, 26
Rapping, i. 102; descriptions of, i. 189; investigated by Buffalo doctors, i. 184; machinery for producing, i. 188; at Hydesville, i. 173 *seq.*; in England, ii. 4
Rappists, the, i. 218
Rapport, between witch and her victim, i. 22; between physician and patient,

i. 46–7; in Animal Magnetism, i. 60–1, 65, 69, 73, 98; in Spiritualism, i. 192
Rayleigh, Lord, ii. 89, 160, 205
Recognition, at materialisation séances, ii. 114–16, 249; of spirit photographs, ii. 117 *seq.*; of Mrs. Piper's controls, ii. 342–4
Rehn, Isaac, on levitation, i. 243
Reichenbach, Baron von, i. 117–20, 132; ii. 330
Reincarnation, ii. 161, 315 *seq.*
Religious aspect of Spiritualism, ii. 352
Reverie, induced, ii. 294
Ribot, on fallaciousness of memory, ii. 211; on physical basis of consciousness, ii. 355
Rich, Elihu, ii. 32
Richet, Charles, ii. 178, 292; on Eusapia Paladino, ii. 198, 203
Richmond, B. W., i. 203, 236 *seq.*, 250
Rita, exposure of, ii. 111
Rivail, M. *See* Allan Kardec
Roberts, Mrs., rapping medium, ii. 4, 5, 19
Robertson, Dr. Lockhart, his séance with Squire, ii. 51–2
Rochester, N.Y., i. 179, 182, 183
Rogers, Dawson, ii. 177
Rogers, Dr. E. C., i. 203, 250; ii. 35; his *Philosophy of Mysterious Agents*, i. 288
Römer, Dr., i. 198
Rondi, Signor, on a case of materialisation, ii. 105
Rosicrucians, i. 14
Ruggles, A. D., American medium, i. 261
Rymer, J. S., ii. 25, 225, 230; his sitting with Home, 233–6

Saadi, spirit of, ii. 91, 93
St. Medard, Convulsionaries of, i. 6 *seq.*
St. Paul, alleged communications from, i. 268, 295
Salem witches, i. 17, 19, 21, 22
Sandby, Rev. G., i. 128, 131, 146; on table-turning, ii. 11
Scents, introduction of, at Moses' séances, ii. 278
Scott, J. D., i. 204; and Mountain Cove Community, i. 295 *seq.*
Scottish Review on table-turning, ii. 21, 22
Scratching bed with toes, i. 23, 26–7, 31
Seeress of Prevorst, i. 99–109
Sexton, George, ii. 169
Seybert Commission on Spiritualism, ii. 194–5
Shakers and Spiritualism, i. 209
Shakespeare, alleged communication from, i. 272–3
Shaler, Professor, his sitting with Mrs. Piper, ii. 333–5
Shaw, Rev. C. J. M., on a case of alleged elongation, ii. 259–61
Shekinah, the, i. 204, 236
Shorter, Thomas, ii. 34–5, 44, 163
Showers, Miss, ii. 76, 78, 99–108; exposure of, ii. 104
Sidgwick, Professor Henry, ii. 90, 177; on private mediumship, ii. 272; on disinterested fraud, ii. 273
Sidgwick, Mrs. Henry, ii. 178, 205, 292; on spirit photographs, ii. 124; on de Gasparin's experiments, ii. 187; on Eusapia Paladino, ii. 202; on Mrs. Piper, ii. 336, 346
Signatures, doctrine of, i. 45
Sinnett, A. P., ii. 175
Slade, Dr., his slate-writing, ii. 87 *seq.* 204–5, 271; prosecution of, ii. 250; sittings with Zöllner, ii. 190–3; his evasion of tests, ii. 192–3; the Seybert Commission on, ii. 195; exposure by Truesdell, ii. 216
Slate-writing, i. 248; ii. 204 *seq.*; various methods employed, ii. 221
Slawensik Poltergeist, i. 28–9
Sleep, as deviation from sanity, ii. 294; at distance, induction of, i. 135–6
Smith, Clifford, his recognition of fiancée at a séance, ii. 115
Smith, G. A., his séance with Eglinton, ii. 213–15
Socialism, its connection with Spiritualism, i. 164, 166, 169, 172–6, 209 *seq.* 292; ii. 42
Solomons and Stein, experiments in motor-automatism, ii. 301
Sorcery, accusations of, i. 64, 79
Space of four dimensions, ii. 191–3
Spear, John Murray, i. 214 *seq.*, 218, 292; ii. 22; his inspirational writings, i. 274 *seq.*; his missions of healing, i. 281, 294; and the new motor, i. 298 *seq.*
Speer, Mr. Charlton, ii. 276, 282
Speer, Dr. Stanhope, ii. 115, 169, 271 *seq.*
Spheres, spiritual, i. 301
Spicer, Henry, i. 189; account of séance, i. 193; his séance with Foster, ii. 53–4
Spirit-control as excuse for fraud, 200, 285
Spirit, material nature of, i. 301–2; i. 16, 171–4
Spirit Teachings, by W. S. Moses, i. 283–6

Spiritual counterparts, i. 294
Spiritual Herald, ii. 23, 32
Spiritual Magazine, ii. 163
Spiritual Notes, ii. 177
Spiritual Philosopher, on Stratford Poltergeist, i. 196, 204 *seq.*
Spiritual Telegraph (N.Y.), i. 204, 248
Spiritualism at Stockholm in 1788, i. 76; in France, i. 78–91; in Germany, i. 92–110; characteristics of American movement, i. 299 *seq.*; attitude to Christianity, i. 299; legislation against, in America, i. 305; memorial to Congress, U.S.A., i. 306; slow progress in England, ii. 1, 43, 45; religious aspect of, ii. 352; decline of, in England, ii. 354; evidence for, ii. 354 *seq.*
Spiritualist, the, ii. 108, 168, 177
Spiritualists, numbers of, i. 291, 303
Squire, J. R. M., séance with, ii. 51
Starr, Frank, his visions, ii. 40–1
Stein and Solomons, their experiments in motor-automatism, ii. 301
Stevenson, R. L., a case of hallucination, ii. 250–1
Stewart, Professor Balfour, ii. 141, 177, 238
Stewart, Dr. Duncan, i. 125
Stock, Mr. St. George, ii. 107; on religion of Spiritualism, ii. 167; account of a séance, ii. 246–7, 252
Stockholm, Spiritualists at, in 1788, i. 76
Stockwell Poltergeist, i. 27–8
Stomach, seeing with, i. 61, 63–4, 74
Stone, the electro-biologist, ii. 4
Stone-throwing in witchcraft, i. 23; in somnambulism, i. 102–3
Stoney, Dr. J. G., a case of hallucination, ii. 251
Stratford (Conn.) Poltergeist, i. 194 *seq.*
Subconscious muscular action as explanation of table-turning, ii. 8 *seq.*
Subliminal consciousness, Mr. Myers' views on, ii. 358–9
Suggestion, i. 67, 119–20; post hypnotic, ii. 323 *seq.*
Sun-circles, i. 107–8
Sunderland, Laroy, i. 129, 154, 168, 204 *seq.*, 217, 225; his theory of Pathetism, i. 156–8, 173; on Stratford Poltergeist, i. 196–8; on levitation, i. 243; his attitude to Christianity, i. 300
Swedenborg, Emanuel, i. 15, 76, 78, 81, 95, 109, 158, 166, 172, 192, 209, 268, 271; Swedenborgianism, its relation to Spiritualism, i. 291, 300; ii. 23, 32, 37
Symons, Miss, her séance with Eglinton, ii. 212
Sympathetic medicine, i. 46–8
Szapary, ii. 161

Table-tilting, Home's performance, i. 243; ii. 28, 241–2
Table-turning, ii. 7 *seq.*
Tahiti, fire-ordeal in, ii. 265
Taine on hallucination, ii. 248
Tallmadge, Governor, i. 228, 272 *seq.*, 303
Tamlin, Mrs., i. 182, 202, 227
Tanchou, Dr., on Angelique Cottin, i. 41–2
Tappan, Mrs., i. 265; her trance-speaking, ii. 134–9
Tardy de Montravel, i. 61, 66, 79, 92
Tebb, Mrs. W., a case of fire-ordeal, ii. 264
Tedworth, the Drummer of, i. 26–7
Telegraphy, spiritual, i. 252–3
Telepathy, evidence for, ii. 332; definition of, ii. 359–60. *See* Thought-transference
Templeton, J. M., his séance with Eglinton, ii. 213–15
Theobald, Miss, her trance-writings, ii. 133
Theobald, Morell, ii. 75, 177; on his experiences, ii. 91–4
Theosophical Society, ii. 175–6, 178
Theosophy, i. 107
Thompson, Mrs., ii. 357
Thought-transference, i. 5–6, 9; in witchcraft, i. 23; in alchemy, i. 47; in magnetic trance, i. 63, 65, 69, 70, 85, 87, 90, 93, 94, 110, 133, 140, 150; by mediums, i. 190 *seq.*, 242, 251; ii. 176, 182, 329; Professor Barrett on, ii. 159
Threads, use of, in conjuring tricks, ii. 241–2, 272–3
Thury, Professor, ii. 161; his experiments, ii. 187–8
Tiffany, Joel, i. 292, 300, 303
Times on Davenport Brothers, ii. 57–8; on Foster's mediumship, ii. 53; on need of investigating Spiritualism, ii. 140
Tissié on dreams prompting to action, ii. 322
Tolmaque, his imitation of the Davenport Brothers, ii. 59–60
"Tongues," speaking and writing in, i. 4–11, 207, 257 *seq.*; ii. 34, 37–9, 73, 304–5
Touch, sense of, its fallibility, ii. 197
Tout, C. H., his experiences, ii. 302–4, 355; on day-dreaming, ii. 309

Townshend, Rev. C., i. 116, 121, 124, 128, 131; ii. 330; experiments of, i. 135, 137, 142; testimony to clairvoyance, i. 147; on table-turning, ii. 9
Transference of sensibility, ii. 330
Tremblers of the Cevennes. *See* Cevennes
Truesdell, J. W., his *Bottom Facts concerning Spiritualism*, ii. 85, 114; his imitation of slate-writing, ii. 216
Turketine, Master Willie, ii. 64
Tylor, E. B., ii. 238
Tyndall, Professor, ii. 141, 145; account of a séance, ii. 147

Underhill, Mrs. (Leah Fox), i. 179, 181
Univercœlum, i. 171-6, 203-4, 218; ii. 351
Universalism and Spiritualism, i. 217 *seq.*; ii. 351

Van Ghert, a case of clairvoyance, i. 93
Varley, Cromwell, ii. 71, 145, 151, 174; his experiments with Miss Cook, ii. 156-7
Veitch, his inspirational poetry, ii. 139
Verrall, Mrs. A. W., her experiences in crystal-seeing, ii. 295-7
Visions in trance, i. 280-1
Volckman, ii. 79; exposes Miss Cook, ii. 103, 152

Wakley, Thomas, i. 114-15, 124
Wallace, Dr. A. R., ii. 147, 151, 238; on clairvoyance, ii. 126; on Mrs. Guppy, ii. 65-7
Ward, Mr. Squire, i. 126
Warner, Abby, i. 304
Washington, spirit of, i. 268, 269
Wedgwood, Hensleigh, ii. 170, 212
Werner, Heinrich, i. 104
Wesermann, i. 94, 110
Wesley, John, and the Epworth Poltergeist, i. 32-9; ii. 349
Wesley, Samuel, account of the Epworth disturbances, i. 34
Wild, Hannah, and Mrs. Piper, ii.
Wilkinson, J. Garth, i. 210; ii. 25, 225, 230
Wilkinson, W. M., ii. 39-40, 44, 263
Will, action of, in hypnotism, i. 57, 73
Williams, Abigail, and Salem witchcraft, i. 21
Williams, Charles, ii. 63, 76, 78, 97, 104, 110, 275; exposure of, 111
Wisconsin Phalanx, i. 210 *seq.*
Witchcraft, i. 16-24
Witch confessions, i. 16-18
Witch-marks, i. 16, 20
Wood, Miss, ii. 105, 108; authenticity of experience with, ii. 112; exposure of, ii. 113
Writing, automatic, i. 264 *seq.*; ii. 19, 20, 31 *seq.*
Writing on arm by Foster, ii. 55
Wyld, Dr. George, ii. 87, 176, 177
Wynne, Captain, ii. 255-6

Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph, ii.

Zoist, i. 115, 120, 121, 124, 128, 131, 154; ii. 3, 5
Zöllner, Professor, his experiments with Slade, ii. 190-3

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
ANNOUNCEMENTS,	2
GENERAL LITERATURE,	8-27
METHUEN'S STANDARD LIBRARY,	27
BYZANTINE TEXTS,	27
LITTLE LIBRARY,	28
LITTLE GUIDES,	28
LITTLE BIOGRAPHIES,	28
LITTLE BLUE BOOKS	29
LIBRARY OF DEVOTION,	29
OXFORD COMMENTARIES,	29
HANDBOOKS OF THEOLOGY,	29
CHURCHMAN'S LIBRARY,	29
CHURCHMAN'S BIBLE,	30
LEADERS OF RELIGION,	30
SOCIAL QUESTIONS OF TO-DAY,	30
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERIES,	31
COMMERCIAL SERIES,	31
CLASSICAL TRANSLATIONS,	31
SCHOOL EXAMINATION SERIES,	32
METHUEN'S JUNIOR SCHOOL-BOOKS,	32
TEXTBOOKS OF TECHNOLOGY,	32
FICTION,	32-38
THE FLEUR DE LIS NOVELS,	39
BOOKS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS,	40
THE NOVELIST,	40
METHUEN'S SIXPENNY LIBRARY,	40

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